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# REALITIES AND SHAMS



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# REALITIES AND SHAMS

BY

L. P. JACKS

WILLIAMS AND NORRIS

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## FOREWORD

THE essays in this volume have been prompted by reflection on the course of events during the last nine years. They are not a haphazard collection, but have an underlying theme which those who have the patience to read them through will apprehend without difficulty. Two were written during the war, four immediately afterwards, the others at intervals extending to the date of the present publication. For permission to reprint those that have appeared before—in the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Land and Water*, *The Modern Churchman*, *The Challenge*—the courtesy of the editors is here gratefully acknowledged. Most of these have been extensively revised. It is hoped that nothing has been included in the volume which is out of date.

OXFORD, *October* 1928.



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# REALITIES AND SHAMS

## LEST WE FORGET

THAT Matthew Arnold's definition of culture—"getting to know the best that has been said and thought"—goes to the root of the matter there are many reasons for doubting. But it seems likely that this definition will continue to exercise a weighty influence on the aims of educational practice, and indeed we must all desire that it should do so. Hence arises an interesting question touching the fortunes of literature. As this type of culture becomes more diffused through the community, how will it affect the output of new books? Will it increase or diminish the supply? Will it stimulate the activities of authorship or restrain them?

The answer is, of course, that it will do the



one or the other according to the kind of literature we have in mind. In some directions the writing of new books will be increased ; in others it will be diminished. In some, restraint will be imposed upon authorship ; in others, a new incentive will come into being. Let us deal first with the restraint.

Getting to know the best that has been said and thought will certainly tend to dissipate the illusion of originality in many quarters where it now exists, and so check the writing of many books whose authors would otherwise believe they had something fresh to say. The more we know of the best that has been said, the more difficult shall we find it to say anything better, and the more afraid of saying something not so good.

Exploders of myths, for example, haters of indeterminate engagements, iconoclasts, hard rationalists, and no-nonsense men in general, who get to know the best that has been done in that thorough-going line of operation, will think twice before trying to improve on the smashing blows delivered by Thomas Paine in the *Age of Reason*. Modernists, again, who get to know the best that has been said in Modern-

ism, will be content to name *Literature and Dogma*, or *God and the Bible*, without further spilling of ink. And many social reformers, we may imagine, who get to know the best that has been said on reconstruction, will write no book of their own, but merely ask for a cheap edition of *Unto this Last*. Sceptics, also, who get to know the best or the worst that has been said by "the spirit that denies" (best and worst being here synonymous), will find the wind taken out of their sails on making the acquaintance of one Sextus Empiricus, now deeply fallen into oblivion even among the learned, but a lively and amazing phenomenon in his own time, a scourge of philosophers and a terror to churchmen, leaving a mark on their works still to be seen by the discerning eye; compared with whose performances, eighteen centuries ago, our latter-day agnosticism pales to a ghost; the said Empiricus having made the interesting discovery that we cannot know whether anything whatsoever, even our own philosophy, is either true or false, and found perfect peace in that conclusion, though the conclusion itself, by his own showing, was just as likely to be false as true.

In these and in many other directions the pursuit of culture will be a constant warning to us not to let our buckets down into wells that dried up before we were born, not to cut new coats out of old breeches, not to make noises that were outroared in the vanished generations, not to dance upon ropes that have rotted in the rain of the centuries.

Of course there will always be people who, having got to know the best on the matter in hand, will be unaware that it *is* the best, and will rate it second-best, or not good at all, and believe they can do something better themselves—iconoclasts who think they can hit harder than Paine, modernists who think they can be more up to date than Arnold, reformers who think they can be more beneficent than Ruskin, sceptics who think they can steal a march on Sextus Empiricus. This danger—that we may get to know the best without recognising it *as* the best—is a very serious one, and it was strangely overlooked by the author of *Culture and Anarchy*. It leads to an immense waste of energy in putting up the significance of things into new parcels, while continually frittering away the substance of the contents.

But we may leave that aside and confine attention to the people whose culture has brought them not only to the point of knowing the best, but to the much higher point of being definitely sure that there is nothing better—to the people, that is, who know what they are about. Upon them culture will certainly act as a restraint in the matter of book-writing. Books that they would have written had they remained unacquainted with the best they will now not write. They will know them to be unnecessary, and they will fear an anticlimax. Such will be the restraining influence on authorship of getting to know the best that has been said and thought. Let us now pass over to the other side and consider the incentives.

The man who learns something—and none of us can learn all—of the best that has been said and thought about the things that really matter in this world, will discover at the same time *how much of all that has been clean forgotten by the vast majority of those who should have remembered it.* If he is a selfish man this, of course, will not trouble him. He will wrap himself round in his fine new mantle of culture,

like the soul in Tennyson's *Palace of Art*, and leave his fellow-men to wallow in their forgetfulness and to go to the devil. But if a spark of fellow feeling glows in his breast, his first impulse will be to give these forgetful multitudes a reminder of what they have forgotten, and the odds are that he will write a book for that purpose.

One may even venture a prediction as to the kind of book he will write. It will show signs of impatience. Our author will have much ado, at times, to restrain himself from violent language, from taking his readers, so to speak, by the scruff of the neck and shaking the forgetfulness out of them. Indeed in these days of thick-coming bewilderments, when the lesson of one "crisis" is hardly learnt before the onset of a second blots out the memory of the first, there will be much to try the patience of any man who is fortunate enough to become acquainted with the best that has been said and thought. All around him, for example, he will hear people clamouring for a leader, imploring the heavens to send them a prophet, and whining over their miserable estate in an

age when there is none to lead and none to prophesy. At such moments our man of culture, like One of old, will turn "to the *multitudes* also," whose lot he would otherwise compassionate, and feel tempted to cry, "Ye hypocrites!" "Unhappy mortals," he will say, avoiding the stronger epithet, "your leader was sent you not long ago, but you deserted him, as your fathers deserted his forerunners, and went after your own inventions as they did; your prophet has spoken, but you talked him down with the babel of your own foolish tongues; you wore out his life with your paltry criticisms; you begged him to be 'constructive,' and whatever he constructed you instantly pulled to pieces; and even when he spoke in thunder you would not hearken, but sat there inattentive, and preoccupied in composing your perorations, waiting for your chance to catch the Speaker's eye. So you treated the man whom Providence sent but yesterday to lead you to the Promised Land. And will the next fare better than the last? Think you the kind heavens will never tire of sending you leaders to desert, apostles to forget, and prophets to shoot at? What, then, is your notion of a

leader and your definition of a prophet? Do you define him as one whose speech will be reported in to-morrow's *Times*? Must he be alive in the flesh that you may heckle him? Must you have him bodily there, doing obeisance for your miserable votes? Must he be convertible from leader into victim at your discretion? Must he please you when you are drunk as well as when you are sober? Will you acknowledge no man as leader unless you can *get at him*, and turn him out at the next general election, or throw him down a well if he fails to humour you? Is none to be accounted a prophet unless you have him with you in the ship, so that you can fling him overboard if he looks dangerous, with a great fish handy to swallow him? Know, then, that your leader has been given you, he was here not long ago—but *now he is dead*. He is the voice you have forgotten, the man you have deserted, now passed, happily for him, beyond the reach of your votes, your criticisms, your intrigues, your turnings-out, and your treacheries. But dead though he be, and far out of your reach, he can still lead, *if you have the wisdom to follow.*"

To some such indignant utterance will the man of culture, who has taken pains to become acquainted with the best, often feel himself stung. His search for the best will bring him to the discovery of many a *lost leader*, of whom the world has proved unworthy, but whose leadership is still available and all the more trustworthy because he is no longer here to solicit our votes and be embittered by our ingratitude. Books will be written to remind us of that. Their motto will be "Lest we forget." In this direction the spread of culture will unquestionably act as an incentive to authorship.

No doubt there will be other incentives and other restraints. But the pair indicated may serve as specimens. An increase of books that are necessary, a decrease of those that are unnecessary, will be the general effect of getting to know the best that has been said and thought.



## REALITIES AND SHAMS

IF the books of the past were remembered, how many books of the present would be unnecessary, and perhaps intolerable ! I hesitate to name a general fraction, but in philosophy, which has become both forgetful and anarchic—forgetfulness is ever a close companion of anarchy—I venture the guess that *half* of what is now being published is an inferior version of what was better done long ago. In these days of confusion the mind has no settled resting-place, thought is a dweller in tents, memory shortens, and the book-trade reaps the advantage.

How much thought, valuable in its day and, for aught we know, valuable now, lies buried on the shelves of yonder library ! Those forgotten volumes of the men of old, opened only when the librarian takes stock ; those later classics of the mother tongue, mid-Victorian it may be,

which the rising generation, fed on "books about books," has learnt to take as read, were they not in their time and place the very last things out? Men ran to the booksellers' shops to buy them, and cried of them, as they met one another, "Have you read this? Have you read that?" I see one yonder that kept the London coffee-houses in an uproar for months and caused gentlemen in wigs to whip out their swords: you would not hit the title in a hundred guesses. Another, in praise of Justice, whose author could not stir abroad but a mob gathered at his heels and pelted him with mud. Another, with an eighteenth-century date on its worm-eaten title-page, which quenched for ever (so they said) the doubts of men concerning the existence of God. Who can say that what I am writing now is not a disinterment of what is written in one of those books? Not I certainly. The world of books has become like a congested churchyard. Every grave we dig disturbs the resting-places of the buried generations. We cannot stir the ground to plant a tree or a rose-bush but the spade turns up the jawbone of a prophet.

"But it is only the rubbish that men forget

—and a good thing too! No genuine accent of the Holy Ghost was ever lost.” I am not so sure. Not long ago I purchased, on the break-up of a well-known library, where it had been for many years, the large paper edition in thirty volumes of the Collected Works of Thomas Carlyle. In every volume the pages were uncut. I remembered the owner of that library, who was a man of learning, his large family, how one of his sons is now a distinguished servant of the State, and a sadness came over me as I thrust my paper-knife into those uncut pages.

Is it not deplorable that writings so admirable should have become back numbers to the young souls of the rising generation; that a light so precious should be lost amid the dazzle of fireflies and wills-o'-the-wisp that flicker in our troubled air? Wrong in judgment, faulty in temper, violent in diction we know that Carlyle often was, but for scope of vision, for penetration of insight, where among the living shall we find his match? “They call me fine writer and all that,” he said in his old age, “but who of them has believed my report?” Well, his “report” is easier to

believe in these days than it was in those. Much of it has been fulfilled, and is being fulfilled, under our eyes. The best of his writings, read at the present hour, are predictions come true.

In the *Latter Day Pamphlets*, for example, we may find a startling diagnosis of our present anarchies, their cause and their cure, set forth with a prescience that makes the book more appropriate to 1923 than to 1850. The cause is Sham; the cure is Reality; the main difference between this time and that being that, now, Reality is held in less honour and Sham come to a more dangerous head. The harvest of calamity foreseen by Carlyle, as the certain consequence to states, nations, and societies, of turning their backs on Reality and committing their fortunes to the guidance of Sham, we have actually reaped and are still reaping. The recent war was unquestionably the offspring of Sham, and, as might be expected, the "peace" that followed was a Sham of the first magnitude, thereby completing the circle. Nor is there any way out of these troubles save the arduous one which leads back, through the sacrifice of

many illusions, to the Realities we have deserted.

Of which Realities the first is Duty, as Carlyle said. For a long time past our civilisation, under the guidance of sham religion and sham politics, has been developing contrivances for enabling men to evade the stern demands of individual duty and to create, by mass-machinery, values which can only be created by each man doing the task which lies nearest to him with all his might. This mass-contrivance for getting duty done, while the individual is left free to serve the devil at his pleasure, is the summary Sham of modern times.

And yet in the very infatuation of their attempt to make a mass-machine that will do their duty for them, men still pay homage to the truth that duty must, somehow, be done. With all their backslidings in this matter, with all their evasions, spurious dialectics, and hollow sophistries, men still remain solid in the conviction that, whatever else happens to Duty, *done*, by one means or another, it must be. This is the one accent of the Holy Ghost that cannot be lost, the one link with Reality

that all the powers of darkness cannot break—the sheet anchor of mankind.

In spite of many valiant attempts, philosophers have not yet succeeded in making it clear why there should be anything but Reality in the universe, why Sham should parade there at all. Some have found relief in the doctrine that Reality exists *in degrees*—everything being real according to its kind, Sham at the bottom and Perfection at the top. But why Reality should spread itself out in this manner, thinning off in one direction towards pure Sham and concentrating in the other towards pure Perfection, remains a mystery, which is equally mysterious whichever way you read the story—the pure article “evolving” into the counterfeit, or the counterfeit into the pure article; the thick reality into the thin, or the thin into the thick. Lord Haldane, for example, tells us, in his *Pathway to Reality*, how Reality can be found. But the mystery is that we should ever have lost it and need a philosopher to teach us how to find it. One would think that the *business* of Reality is just to be real and, therefore, that it can never water itself down,

nor suffer any man or devil to water it, into a Sham. Yet the Shams are there, none the less noxious whatever we may call them, but the more hateful when called by names which seem intended to disguise their noxiousness. To understand this queer construction of the universe has been a sore travail to the sons of men, and so it will remain to the end of the chapter.

Perhaps we should be well advised to confine ourselves to a task more within the compass of our forces, that, namely, of finding some test by which to distinguish, some clue by which to disentangle, the Shams from the Realities in a world where they are so strangely intermingled. Of such tests or clues there are at least two which the plain man can apply for himself.

The first test is *Order*. Whenever the affairs of men are moving towards Order we may conclude at once that the motives of their action are derived from Reality, Order being Reality's first law. Contrariwise, when life becomes anarchic, whether in states or in individuals, the presumption is strong that Shams are abroad and that men are the victims of them. It was in these terms that Matthew Arnold

read the signs of his times. He too saw anarchy on the horizon, and traced its origin to Shams. The public life of England, he said, was "a Thyestean banquet of claptrap." Culture, he thought, was the remedy, as no doubt it is, provided we have it of the right kind.

The second test is *Reserve*. Most of the good deeds in the world are done in secret, and the best deeds, and the *best part of every deed*, cannot be done otherwise. The major operations of the universe take place in the same manner; that which sees the light in sense or in science being no more than a passing glimpse of what goes on in the great deeps, itself unknown, but lending an infinite significance to the little we know. Of nothing whatsoever, from the atom of hydrogen to God in the heavens, is the whole Reality offered to view; so that anything which pretends to exhibit the whole of itself in public may be set down without more ado as, to that extent, a Sham.

The "public life" of a nation is a notable example. As wise historians are now beginning to recognise, the part of a nation's life which



attains notoriety, or gets itself visibly or audibly published, is a small affair compared with other parts which never come into public at all, these latter being transacted, like the best deeds and the major operations of the universe, under conditions which do not invite the presence of reporters. Whenever, therefore, this "public life" begins to set itself up for the whole life of the nation, or even the most important part of it, it immediately becomes infected with Sham, breaks out into senseless wars, and confusion, the other mark of Sham, ensues.

Idolatry, both ancient and modern, and in all its varieties, which are many, exemplifies the same process. An idol presents the divinity complete, finished off, with nothing left out to the last coat of varnish. We can place our idol on a public pedestal; say of him, "Lo here, lo there"; walk round him; view him behind and before; evaluate him as a work of art; criticise him as a construction of philosophy; photograph him from every angle of vision; multiply him into millions of copies each indistinguishable from himself and from one another. We can pack him in a wooden box or in a formula; send him off by parcel post,

goods delivery, or telegraph according to his measured dimensions, weight avoirdupois, or cost at a penny a word ; whoever gets him gets the whole of the god ; *there* he is, and there is no bit of him anywhere else. What more is needed to prove him a sham ? At every point reality disowns him, and Nature says "He is not mine." His all-completeness betrays him. His finish undoes him. His self-repetitions declare him manufactured. His self-sufficiencies reduce him to naught. His portableness marks him an abstraction, and the care with which he is tied up suggests contraband. Becoming known at all points, he becomes, at the same time, not worth knowing, except, perhaps, to the police. They labour in vain who seek to discredit religion by proving the unknowableness of God. What discredits religion is not the unknowableness of God, but the knowableness of Mumbo-Jumbo.

And so with things in general. The more real they are, the more of them is unexposed ; the less real, the less there is for the imagination to fill in and for the heart to love. There is more reality in the whispers of death than in the clamours of life ; more in the dances of

beauty round a single setting of the sun than in all the eloquence poured forth since electioneering began : the reason being, not that the clamours and the eloquence mean nothing, but that they pretend to more meaning than they have ; while the whispers of death and the dances of beauty are content to be regarded as quite meaningless by the majority of mankind, and take no pains to persuade anyone of the contrary. All realities, God included, act as though they had nothing to gain from the plaudits of the multitude.

Not all philosophers have been explicit at this point. They have drawn a distinction between "appearance" and "reality," some holding that we can know the former but not the latter : a curious doctrine, since, if it were true, it is pretty obvious that nobody could ever find it out ; in which case we should be living in a mixed world of Realities and Shams, but unable to tell which was which, or even to assure ourselves that any difference existed between the two—like our recent acquaintance Sextus Empiricus. Let the difference between the two mean what it may, we should certainly be mistaken in assuming that every "appear-

ance " is fraudulent ; for the whisper of death and the dance of beauty are also " appearances," and they, most assuredly, are no shams. Every "appearance" is real as far as it goes, becoming fraudulent only when it yields to the craving for publicity and pretends to be the whole of what appears, as the clamours of life are wont to do ; but the whispers of death and the dances of beauty, never ! The barest minimum of publicity is enough for the real ; Shams seek the maximum and are never satisfied.

It follows from all this that the reality of a *thing* should be sought for in its least obtrusive aspect ; the reality of the *soul*, in that part of man which has least to say for itself. Verbosity being the medium in which reality soonest dissolves, whatever has most to say for itself, and repeats it often, is likely to be unreal, or on the way to become so. As a test between Reality and Sham, *qui s'excuse s'accuse* is almost infallible. In literature, Reality has its home between the lines ; the philosopher leaves it unproved, the orator unstated, the poet unsung ; all three can hint at it, the poet most happily, but no more. Naturally it shuns the limelight, and with the art of advertisement,

where all Shams are expert and industrious, it has nothing whatever to do. For the same reason it avoids *repetition*. That which can be endlessly repeated, without change of meaning, is an abstraction, and most Shams are simply abstractions pretending to be something more. But the words of the wise are alive with the vitality of the *fact*, which varies with the soul that apprehends it. Great sayings, we are told, enrich their meaning, or become more real, with the lapse of ages. This is true; but it is not repetition that enriches the meaning of anything. A truth is enriched by the experience of those who translate it into the substance of their lives, which causes it to bear, each time they utter it, a new *accent*, and so become virtually a new truth. For it is the way of Reality to reveal its presence less by the fixed and inanimate form of the word, and more by the living, breathing, and ever-changing *accentuation*, which is a kind of overtone, or singing accompaniment, to what is audibly said or visibly written. Apart from their wonderful fertility in overtones, great sayings mean more on their first utterance than they ever mean afterwards. It is their nature to be impover-

ished by those who go about merely repeating them, the overtones, which enrich them, coming out only when the sayings are acted upon as soon as they are heard—one of the deeper secrets of the Christian religion, though clean contrary to the general belief.

Try, then, to preserve the reality of a great saying by mere verbal repetition, or multiplication of copies, and (in spite of M. Coué) you will find it continually evaporating until finally there is nothing left of it but a spectre. Such are the vain repetitions of the heathen, whether in argument or in prayer. Take the word "God," for example, make it into a philosophical counter, keep it circulating as a medium of argumentative exchange, and presently you will arrive at the point where you have to say, with Scotus Erigena, *Deus non immerito nihil vocatur*, "God is not improperly called nothing"; and though you may add the words *per excellentiam*, as Erigena did, the *excellencia*, repeated too often, will be not improperly called nothing along with the rest. The same has happened, or may happen, to many leading terms of our political vocabulary, such as democracy, supremacy of the people, self-determination, league of nations,

labour, capital, socialism, individualism, and, notably, to the word "policy" itself. All these terms, instead of gaining reality by repetition, lose it, until finally they enter the state of pure spectrality, when we have to say of each in turn, *non immerito nihil vocatur*.

In contrast to all this, Reality steals among us under a deep reserve, not only having very little to say for itself, but repeating that little as seldom as possible, and never with the same accent twice. Its conversation is "Yea, yea; nay, nay." It cometh not with observation, and the overtones that reveal it are inaudible, save to lovers of the "unheard melodies" singing their endless variations in the universe and in the soul. In short, the reality of things is inversely proportional to the noisiness of their self-announcement. Whatever comes bouncing in, with a brass band in front of it and a crowd of people shouting "Ditto, ditto," behind it, is pretty sure to be a sham. Reserve, then, is the test. The old religions recognised this in their reluctance to utter the name of God, and in the penalties they denounced against those who took it in vain.

The habit of recognising Realities by their

reserve, and Shams by their blatancy, is not easily formed. At every step we have to contend against the stock notion that the nature of Reality is to rush into print and to promote a controversy. Nothing could better show how deeply the two things have become confused. It is the Shams that *rush* into print, while the Realities *creep* into it reluctantly, or keep out of it altogether. The proper vehicle for the expression of Reality is not print, but the silent work of the world and the personal characters of men and women, grounded, as for ever they must be, on the value of the work they produce. It is as certain as anything can be in this universe that until we express Reality in that manner we do not express it at all. Nothing that print can accomplish will serve the purpose unless we have a background in daily work and personal character to interpret and sustain it. What is great literature but the echo of splendid achievement? What age of shoddy, what nation of jerrybuilders, what race of cowards has ever produced an immortal book or sung an immortal song? It is the work that explains the literature, not the literature that explains the work. The key



to the word is in the deed. But all this we have turned upside-down, framing our "culture" accordingly, and the task of our times is to restore it to the right position. And a most difficult task that is.

To reconcile Reality with Sham is for ever impossible, the relation of the two in the universe being that of flat and eternal antipathy. Not long ago we heard one careless of his speech attempting to reconcile them. He was discoursing with much applause of evolution. The universe he described was so benignly arranged that error (by a "slow and gradual" process, of course) "evolved" into truth, and evil into good. To which the answer must be made, that if such a universe exists, most assuredly it is not the one in which we are living. Here things do evolve—who would question it?—but in a very different manner. The lesser lie evolves into the greater and the bad evolves into the worse, not "slowly and gradually," but with a rapidity that is appalling. Lies and evils begin, like everything else, in "undifferentiated homogeneity," and may end, almost before you know where you are, in "differentiated heterogeneity." But they

do not turn into their opposites, and will not in a billion years. The notion that they do is one of the drowsy syrups which sweeten the "banquets of claptrap." And there is none more debauching.

Between the rule of Realities and the rule of Shams the difference is infinite—nothing less. The two are incommensurable. Let none of us say, then, "It is *better* to be ruled by this than by that." *Better?* Is the rule of Sham, then, good up to a point, only not *so* good as the rule of Reality? As God lives it is not good at all! How many a poisonous lie is taking cover at this moment, and thriving, under the foul delusion that while truth is certainly *better* than falsehood, falsehood after all is tolerably good, and perhaps good enough, since, if we wait upon events, it will "evolve" into its opposite! "Degrees in reality," do you remind me? If degrees in reality lead to *that*, let an honest man beware of them! This also will be found in Carlyle.

"But," the perspicacious reader will now be saying, "if Reality is to be known by its

abhorrence of vociferation and by its reluctance to rush into print, what are we to think of this essay? Will it not fall, by its own showing, under the denomination of Sham? Will it not go down into the pit with the idols? Will it not share the fate of Sextus Empiricus, who, having discovered that nothing can be discovered, proceeded forthwith to announce that particular discovery?"

The conclusion seems inevitable. But we are fighting in a better cause than Sextus Empiricus. He was contending that you cannot know the difference between sham and reality, or even whether there is a difference at all; we are contending that there *is* a difference, and an infinite one too, that you can know it, and that your soul's salvation begins in that knowledge. And if the reader concludes, as Logic demands, that by our vociferation and eagerness to rush into print we are fallen into our own net, does he not thereby accept that very rule for the detection of sham which we, at great risk to our reputation for consistency, have been copiously recommending to him? In which case the point of this essay, sham or no sham, is definitely won.

Hoisting the shams with their own petard, we have blown ourselves up along with our enemy, as we knew very well would happen ; and we suggest to the reader, for whom we have done this service, that it ill becomes him to make a mock of our self-immolation and to spurn at our mangled remains. We credit him with a larger mind. A sigh, and not a sneer, is what we expect from him. Naturally, however, he will read no further, since the honest man, having detected the sham, will have nothing more to do with it. But if, as we are shameless enough to hope, he endures our company a little longer, we shall then have to remind him, as gently as we can, that his adoption of the aforesaid conclusion, which condemns us as fraudulent, was not quite sincere. If it were, he would leave us at once. As for ourselves, who are of minor consequence in the matter, perhaps we are not so eager to rush into print as our sharp-witted critic imagines. Perhaps we thought all these things when we were young, and restrained ourselves from saying them till we were old. Perhaps we would rather hold our peace even now. Who knows ? At all events, our spiritual freedom has survived so many

bludgeonings from the Law of Contradiction, which has been trying to make a fool of us all our life, and so hardened are we in our defiance of that kind of logic, which we regard as a typical half-reality putting on the airs of a whole one, that we propose as soon as possible to introduce the topic of the next essay, which is "A Prevalent Inconsistency."

## A PREVALENT INCONSISTENCY

THOSE who study the working of their minds in these critical times—and it is wise to do this occasionally—will perhaps join me in confessing to a measure of inconsistency. I am not speaking of logic, but of temper—of changing moods ; as when, for example, a man is by turns depressed and exalted. There is no reason to be ashamed of such discords, for consistency of temper can hardly be reckoned a human virtue at all. At one extreme it is a prerogative of the gods, at the other a limitation of the brutes ; so that if ever we encounter a being whose moods are never in conflict, we may conclude that he is either supra-humanly wise or infra-humanly stupid—probably the latter. Human nature is most lovable and interesting precisely at those points where its moods contradict one another. The contradictions are a source of energy ; powers that move the world come out

of their clash. A man or an age whose temper never varied would be a nonentity in the world of action.

One of the most interesting of these phenomena is that strange mingling of the *sense of power* and the *sense of powerlessness* which arises in most of us as we view the course of current events. On the one hand, we see ourselves taking part in great public actions with immense resources of wealth, science, and organisation at our disposal. On the other, we seem to be in the grip of vast forces over which we have no control whatsoever, powerless as atoms in a whirling vortex. Our minds oscillate between the two attitudes, mastership and helplessness.

There are moments when the sense of power rises to an extraordinary height and possesses whole multitudes of men at once. When, for example, a new idea, like that of a League of Nations, first gets possession of our minds we are like men intoxicated. We feel that a magic sword has been placed in our hands, and it needs only that we lay about us with vigour to bring a whole world of wrong and error tumbling down. Many examples might

be given of men whom the advent of new ideas has thus intoxicated with the sense of power—the French revolutionists, the positivists, the Malthusians, the Darwinians, the mid-Victorian radicals, the scientific materialists, the followers of Henry George, the early socialists. The Bolsheviki provide a contemporary example. They, too, are out to move mountains. We call them fools and madmen ; and so they may be ; but are there no ideas of our own to which, at one time or another, we have attributed an equal measure of wonder-working power ?

This mood of masterful confidence is our public attitude—the side of our minds we show to one another. We find it in the speeches of statesmen ; in the programmes of political parties and schools ; in propaganda of all kinds ; in the literature of social reconstruction. All these assume that we can mould the world to our will.

An expression that came into prominence during the war curiously reflects these feelings. It is the phrase “ world-dominion.” The idea of world-dominion has many forms, and we are unjust to the Prussian militarists in treating



them as its solitary exponents. We are all addicted to the notion that the world can be *dominated*. Indeed, we are all trying to get it dominated by our own ideas of what is good for it. World-dominion has been claimed at various times for various things—for religion (or for some particular doctrine of religion), for philosophy (as in Plato), for the Goddess of Reason, for science, for socialistic ideals, for Labour. And always the claim has been made by men who, from one cause or another, were exalted for the moment by their sense of power. Some men are thus exalted always. All men are thus exalted sometimes. It is a frame of mind which craves publicity and usually issues in a programme of world-dominion, either of this kind or of that. Such programmes are plentiful at the present moment, and they have more in common with one another than appears at first sight. The League of Nations, for example, is obviously a scheme of world-dominion. So, too, when war broke out in Heaven, as narrated in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the belligerents were agreed on the general necessity of world-dominion. They differed as to the principle

of domination and fought to settle the question.

The idea of world-dominion, now prevalent everywhere in one or other of its many forms, seems to indicate that we are masters of the world—a view of ourselves which implies a sense of enormous power. This, however, is only the public aspect of our mentality. In every age, certainly in our own, there is a side of human life from which reporters are excluded. It is the existence of this unreported side which makes history difficult to write, and often untrustworthy when written. The sense of powerlessness belongs to it. When a man believes that he is captain of his soul, or a ruler of other men's destinies, he can hardly keep his feelings to himself; but when misgivings assail him and he feels as though the bottom were dropping out of his world, he will say as little as possible about his state of mind, both in the public interest and in his own.

I think, therefore, that we should be wrong in concluding that the sense of powerlessness is non-existent because so little of it gets reported in books, in public speeches, in documents of one kind or another. The future historian will mis-

represent the men of to-day if he describes them as cocksure. He will misrepresent them by telling only half of the truth. They *are* cocksure ; but woven in with all this self-confidence there is a strain of profound misgiving. For the evidence of this we must look to the unreported side of human life—the conversations of statesmen after dinner, the confessions of intimate friends, the talk of the club and the railway carriage, the outcries of imaginative men who lie awake at night—things which, from the nature of the case, are not intended for publication.

These two strains, the sense of power and the sense of powerlessness, unquestionably co-exist, the one public, the other private. The one talks proudly of science, and persuades us that with science at our elbow we can move mountains ; the other reminds us that science has got out of hand and become an implement for the self-destruction of mankind. The one points to the miracles of effort and organisation which nations can accomplish when inspired by a unitary motive ; the other replies that a unitary motive may play all kinds of diabolical tricks. The one proclaims that we are partners

in mighty actions directed by the intelligent purpose of the common mind ; the other answers that these mighty actions are forced upon us by circumstances over which we have no control ; that the world is full of violent, unpredictable, explosive forces ; that we are in the grip of elemental powers ; that we are like men who eat and drink while an earthquake is rocking the house. The two views are interwoven in the consciousness of all of us.

If one were asked to name off-hand the outstanding feature of our present political life, the answer would probably be "the growing power of the masses" ; and there is an obvious sense in which the answer might be accepted as true. It correctly describes the fact that policy is becoming less dependent on the wills of a few and more susceptible to forces which originate with the masses of the people. But if it be offered as an account of our political psychology, as meaning that the average citizen is *conscious* of growing power as a political unit, it is the reverse of true. In the consciousness of the citizen it is the sense of powerlessness and not the sense of power which for the moment has the ascendancy.

There is a widespread feeling at work that the human world of to-day, the world with which high politics are concerned, has grown too big to be manageable by any existing methods of political control ; that neither representative government nor government of any other type is competent to deal with the immense and incalculable forces of which modern communities are the seat. This feeling, which is only just beginning to reach the stage of an articulate idea, is a consequence, unforeseen by early political thinkers, of the enormous increase of *mass* which has taken place in the great empires of the world. Needless to say, the late war gave a new significance to these thoughts.

Whatever the true causes of the war may have been, the peoples of Europe know very well that it was none of their doing, and this has greatly deepened the feeling of helplessness, the sense that they are at the mercy of elemental powers. It is a complicated state of mind, and full of strange possibilities for the future history of the world. One might expect that a man would gain a new sense of power in remembering that he is an active member of

a community of fifty or a hundred million souls. Just now it serves rather to remind him of his powerlessness. What can he do as a mere unit in a totality so enormous? He seems to himself an insignificant atom, impotent to affect the destinies of the State one way or another.

Already signs begin to appear that this sense of powerlessness is causing a deep unrest among the more reflective elements of the community. The advance of democracy is gradually revealing a new and unwelcome version of the law of diminishing returns. It is obvious, for example, that when the electorate of a nation is doubled, as it has recently been in this country, the moral significance of the individual citizen is correspondingly reduced. As the mass to be moved increases in magnitude and complexity, his own power to move it, his personal influence on the direction of its movement, diminishes. He becomes lost in the crowd, and whatever wisdom or guidance he has to contribute, or thinks he has, is drowned in the babel of voices which mingle their cries with his. At this point a sharp antinomy breaks out between the tendencies of our social culture on the one side and the tendencies of

our political civilisation on the other. Social culture is aiming everywhere at the production of more highly developed individuals ; at the same time political civilisation is massing these individuals into larger and larger totalities, in which the significance of each, as an acting unit, continually falls. We have to reckon therefore with a rising consciousness of his own value in the individual, and with a falling value of his individuality in the political mechanism. As the masses which include him grow larger they move more irresistibly, perhaps more blindly ; at the same time the individual, awakened by the influence of culture, becomes more conscious of the momentum which is sweeping him off his feet, and of his own impotence to alter its course, even though it seems to him to be heading for destruction. It may be that in the details of his life the laws are abolishing restrictions which hamper his liberty of action, and in that sense he may feel himself becoming a freer man ; but in the general sweep of events that determine the fortunes of civilisation he is becoming more and more of a nonentity, more and more at the mercy of mass movements which are carrying

him and his neighbours he knows not whither. How often in recent years have good men, as they watched the play of forces, apparently blind, which have been making havoc of European civilisation, been struck by the bitter thought that in the determination of these things they counted for nothing at all. Caught in the grip of these mighty currents, what can the "free individual" do but wring his hands in the agony of his helplessness?

Between a political civilisation which swallows up the freedom of the individual in the momentum of the mass, and a culture which develops his personal initiative and teaches him the value of it, there can be no peace. The principle at work in the one is flatly opposed to the principle at work in the other, and the experiences of the last nine years have greatly sharpened their opposition. Sooner or later democracy must effect their reconciliation, or perish in the alternative.



## THE RULE OF IDEAS: A WAR-TIME MISGIVING<sup>1</sup>

WE have been told, and never more frequently than during the years of war, that ideas rule the world; and the saying is often repeated with a seraphic air, as though it were a kind of prelude to the millennium. I am not the least concerned to dispute the proposition as a respectable platitude; but I do contend that seraphic airs are inappropriate to the utterance of it. For it is a truth that cuts both ways. Ideas are of all sorts, good and bad, true and false. Obviously the advantage of being ruled by them depends on which kind happens to be ruling you. Hell is ruled by ideas no less than heaven.

It is a common mistake to suppose that those communities are most to be admired where ideas have the greatest power. In that

<sup>1</sup> *Land and Water*, August 1917.

case, Germany would be the most admirable nation on earth ; for there is no country where ideas are so powerful. This should be enough to prove that it is not always the best ideas which exercise the greatest power. The worst may be in the ascendant, or anything between the best and the worst. For example, ideas " with money in them," which may be neither the worst nor the best, may dominate an epoch or a whole civilisation ; while, on the other hand, the ideas on which manhood and character are founded are often little more than ineffectual ghosts, present everywhere but dominant nowhere.

Another mistake is to suppose that those ideas are the most powerful which are being most talked about. This, I believe, is seldom the fact. A candid reading of history suggests that in all ages of the world the most powerful ideas are precisely those that are being least talked about. The more oratory the less earnestness ; the more eloquence the less action. For example, scientific ideas are, on the whole, far less talked about than moral ideas ; yet, on the whole, scientific ideas produce more earnestness and more action.

A scientific idea soon gives birth to a machine, and the whole structure of society may be swiftly changed in consequence—as happened when the steam-engine was invented, and as will happen now that the aeroplane has been invented. But it takes a long time for a moral idea to translate itself into a civilisation, into a character, or into a manner of life.

The fate of scientific ideas in this respect is very different from that of moral ideas. The scientific idea turns itself into a plan of action, and that with the least possible delay. The moral idea is apt to become a literary or pulpit property, material for copy, stock-in-trade for novelists, playwrights, agitators, preachers, pamphleteers, and lecturers. There is, of course, a literature of steam-engines and aeroplanes, but its bulk is nothing compared with the literature, say, of Christianity. Yet we are more in earnest about steam-engines and aeroplanes than we are about Christianity. At all events, it would be no hard thing to draw up a long list of ideas, good ideas, great ideas, true ideas, which have been in existence for long ages, which have produced literatures and been pro-

digiously talked about, but which have never yet succeeded in ruling the world nor any considerable fraction of it. We have need, therefore, to be cautious about the inferences we draw from the general proposition that ideas rule the world.

The need for this caution is especially great at the present moment.<sup>1</sup> Ideas were never more plentiful than now. A multitude of new ones has come to life, many old ones have been revived, and the new ones combining with the old have broken out into an efflorescence like that of the apple-trees in spring. An enormous number of social improvements might easily be effected by the application of these ideas, or even by the application of a little common sense.

But will they be *applied*? Are we in earnest? Will a world which has stopped its ears to Moses and the Prophets pay more attention to their successors? The propaganda of reconstruction is no doubt a reassuring thing so far as it goes. But how far does it go? The present would not be the

<sup>1</sup> August 1917. About that time the "reconstruction" fever was at its height.

first instance of an intellectual and moral awakening which has produced propaganda but little else. There is always the danger that an outburst of propaganda may deceive mankind into the comfortable belief that something wonderful is going to happen of its own accord, that great changes will follow automatically—because, it is thought, good ideas have a Divine Right to get themselves fulfilled, so that, having cast them on the waters, we may leave the Divine Right that is in them to do the rest, and go to lunch or go to sleep as the occasion prompts.

There is also a danger in the fact that most of the problems we are discussing are, from the intellectual point of view, so fascinating, so intensely provocative of argument, so full of tempting opportunities for that war of minds which provides us with wholesome gymnastic, and which we all love so much. Under these circumstances discussion often gathers round itself a secondary importance of its own, in which the primary importance, perhaps the tragic importance, of the thing we are discussing is submerged and lost sight of. This also has actually happened again and again. The re-

constructions proposed have ended in verbiage, in enormous accumulations of waste-paper, in volumes which gather the dust and are not taken down from the shelf once in a generation.

When the matter is considered in this light we get a new reading of the problem of reconstruction. At first sight the problem appears to consist in finding the right scheme, or the right idea, by the application of which this or that is to be mended. The importance of that I do not belittle—nobody in his senses would dream of belittling it; but behind it lies the far greater problem of finding the *power* to carry out the scheme you have devised, to give effect to the idea you have propounded. I am not referring to political power as it is represented by masses of voters, by measures passed into law, by armies, and by policemen. I mean moral power, as it is represented by the steadiness of the public in the pursuit of its aims, by continuity of effort, by belief in principles, by mutual loyalty, by strict adhesion both to the form and the spirit of a pledge, and by the refusal to be led away by cant. This is the kind of power you want, and without which your

scheme of reconstruction will never be carried out. It is one thing to devise an excellent arrangement and secure the consent of the parties involved; it is quite another thing to secure their continued loyalty to the consent they have given. And it is the last on which the success of your scheme depends. No scheme of betterment has ever yet been devised by the wit of man which was not susceptible of capture by sinister interests, or exposed to ruin by the disloyalty or the forgetfulness of the parties concerned in it.

Take, for example, the League of Peace, one of the boldest and most far-reaching of the "reconstructions" now before mankind. Power, we are told, is to be at the disposal of the League. But what kind of power? Most assuredly it must be moral power or the League will come to grief. It must consist, ultimately, in the continued loyalty of the nations to the objects for which the League was founded; in the spirit of good-fellowship which animates their relations; in mutual respect; in a readiness to take a generous view of each other's merits and each other's claims; and it must have this character not at the start

alone, *but all through and continuously*. In the absence of these conditions the physical power at the disposal of the League, however great it might be, and all the more in proportion to its magnitude, would not be a guarantee of safety, but a new source of peril. It would tempt capture by sinister interests; it would disintegrate through internal treachery; it would be at the mercy and ultimately become the tool of the most astute and unscrupulous member of the League. If peace were to be guaranteed to-morrow by a compact having behind it the massed armies of all the States in the world, I for one would sleep no easier in my bed—unless I knew that behind the armies that other kind of power was at work. On the contrary, my sleep would be more uneasy than ever. And so with regard to every one of the reconstructions, great and small, now before the public. There is not one of them that is worth the paper on which it is written unless we are able to count on moral power, on loyalty, to give it effect.

The question of moral power being then the hinge of the whole problem, can we form any



conception of the social conditions in which good ideas are least likely to be wasted and most likely to succeed ? I think we can.

The likelihood that a good idea will take root and fructify as a social force is ultimately dependent on *the good temper of the community to which it is addressed*. In human society, improvement that is worth the name is never effected by one set of people forcing their ideas down the throats of another set. All improvement takes place *by consent*, by men seeing eye to eye, believing in common and acting together in good faith and mutual loyalty for the given end. This loyal and continuous consent can never be obtained, on a scale large enough to be effective, except in communities whose members, as human beings, are on good terms with one another, respect one another, trust one another, believe in each other's good intentions, and take a generous view of each other's merits and demerits.

Imagine the opposite conditions—and they are not difficult to imagine, for they existed in England before the war and are by no means non-existent even now—and who can doubt that the best idea that ever issued from the

mind of man, the wisest reform ever projected, will inevitably come to grief; it will split on the rock of mutual dislike, suspicion, animosity—in a word, on the rock of bad temper. There is no power in the State that can prevent this, for where the spirit of distrust is rampant, the State itself will be distrusted and its best efforts will be met by the cry that it has been captured by an enemy. In foreign politics every proposal made by one Government will be interpreted as a dodge, or “a move in the game,” by the others. This points to the one essential condition which will have to be fulfilled before any extensive improvement or “reconstruction” can be hoped for. There must be an immense increase of social goodwill, of the spirit of good-fellowship between nations, classes, and individuals—an immense increase beyond the pre-war level, and of course beyond the present level.

We are about to enter upon one of the difficult periods of human history, in which nothing but good temper can save us from confusion such as the world has never seen. If we consider the difficulties one by one instead of treating them in general terms,

we shall find that most of them are of the very kind which is certain, in an evil atmosphere, to give rise to jealousies and suspicions, to set nation against nation, class against class, and man against man.

Great sacrifices will have to be borne. We shall have not only to exert ourselves but to exert ourselves *together* ; friendly co-operation will be the first law, and imperative at every point ; the weak not shrinking from so much of the burden as they are able to bear, and the strong willingly accepting more than the share which would fall to them on a mere counting of heads. We have only to consider what will be involved in the single problem of finding year by year the interest on a national debt of thousands of millions. The one condition on which we can pay our debts is that we keep our tempers, get rid of our nastiness to one another, and act like reasonable beings. The same may be said in regard to every other problem we shall have to meet. Evil is the augury which comes in from time to time of classes, groups, and parties who are only waiting to "go for" their old enemies with fresh vigour and animosity. If that spirit

prevails, the prospects of reconstruction—no matter of what form—are black indeed.

It would be a good thing if the plea for good temper, for the spirit of good-fellowship, for social goodwill in every form, could be made a tail-piece, or put into the forefront, of every scheme for reconstruction. It should be clearly understood that the biggest tax we shall have to pay will be the tax on our social temper, which is going to be strained to the uttermost. Labour and Capital should give the matter their earnest attention. The Trades Unions, the Labour Federations, should take it up, and they should do so in their own interest as well as in that of the public, for it is certain that not one of the objects which Labour is now aiming at is even remotely attainable unless supported by the goodwill and hearty consent of the whole community. The women should take it up—here indeed is a chance for them to introduce something that is both novel and essential into political life. The Churches should take it up.

If we fail at this point, I predict that the multitude of good ideas which the war has called into being will share the fate of many

better ideas with which mankind has been familiar for centuries. They will not rule the world. They will end their career as themes for eloquence, and reconstruction will have to be content with the literature it has produced. A poor result !

## THE POLITICAL OBSESSION AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

AN outstanding characteristic of the times, in which the future historian will find much food for thought, is the enormous exaggeration of the importance of politics. If politics meant in modern practice what they meant to Plato, Aristotle, or Dante, it would be impossible to exaggerate their importance. But, unfortunately, they have come to mean something else.

Because we exaggerate the importance of politics, we overlook, belittle, and sometimes even despise the importance of other things—such as art, poetry, literature, science, culture, philosophy, morals, religion. All these things, which represent the major interests of mankind, *and are the ultimate ground of unity among nations*, suffer grievously from the all-devouring claims of the popular idol. Like a

tree with voracious roots which suck the nature out of the surrounding soil, politics deprive these major interests of the abundant nourishment they require, and leave them half-grown, stunted, and sickly. There are several trees of that kind in the public garden, but politics is the hungriest of them all.

Politics, as we practise them, attack human life from the mechanical end and treat it as a problem in mechanism. The devotee of this method creates "machinery," national or international as the case may be, and then trusts to luck or the next election—pretty much the same thing—to produce the men who can be trusted to work it. He is indifferent to psychology, and takes little account of the ingenuities of the human mind, though these can turn his "machinery" to almost any purpose they please. He is untroubled by the presence in the world of a large class of expert machinery thieves, whose art consists in hypnotising the public and then capturing the apparatus of liberty under the nose of its creators—as, for example, when the machinery of Prohibition in the United States is adroitly seized by whisky-distillers, bootleggers, and other nefari-

ous persons to make enormous fortunes for themselves and to corrupt the morals of great cities.

All this comes from the enormous exaggeration of the importance of politics, which is itself a kind of hypnosis. A public which retained its sense of proportion and was wide-awake to the difference between the major and the minor interests of human life would never suffer itself to be practised upon in this way. It would attack its problems from the human end; that is to say, it would begin by finding the right men to do its work and then provide them with machinery which the wrong men would not so easily capture. In a word, it would return to the politics of Plato.

To break this hypnosis, to wean men from this fanatical idolatry, is one of the hardest and perhaps the most thankless tasks that any writer or thinker could undertake at the present moment. One is contending not only against principalities and powers, but against a far more formidable opponent—to wit, a fixed idea, an obsession, a cult, a habit of mind which has held the field for generations. And yet



who can doubt that "the change of heart" which we are told, with wearisome reiteration, is the first condition of a renovated world, of an effective League of Nations, and which the war was so confidently expected to bring about but has not brought about, consists precisely in our shaking off this blind faith in mechanism and learning to attack our problems from the human end? Machinery is unquestionably important, and will remain so to the end of the chapter. It is an extension of the personality of man. But the world will not always be content to regard the machinery which extends personality as more important than the personality it extends. In the politics of Plato the two things are placed in their right order. We reverse it.

There is the widespread belief that whatever most needs doing in this world must be done by "the Government"; and that whatever is *not* done that needs doing "the Government" is to be blamed for not doing it. General elections are conducted on that basis; it is the assumption of half the speeches in Parliament and the daily sustenance of the newspaper Press, from the most

conservative to the most revolutionary. An error more fatal never flourished.

Again, in popular thought and speech the life of a people is invariably identified with its *political* life—the two terms are used synonymously. Yet the life of a people is not primarily political, and only becomes so when the major interests of mankind have fallen into neglect. It may be religious, as in parts of the East. It may be artistic, as in ancient Athens, in mediæval Italy, in Japan before she came under European influence. It might even become scientific and fulfil the dream of Comte, Herbert Spencer, the mid-Victorian Radicals, and Mr Wells. Or lastly—and the point would be worth enlarging upon—the life of a people might become “political” in the sense given to the word by Plato—which would be the greatest change of all.

Involved in this, and indeed the most mischievous part of it, is the identification of public *men* with political *men*, and of public leaders with political leaders. The front seats of our world are unquestionably for politicians, and are “reserved” accordingly. Behind them in greater or less obscurity

come the men of science, of art, of letters, of religion, and the rest, who may indeed urge their wisdom on the front row but are seldom found there. The public has no conception of national leadership save in the political variety, and is astonished, almost affronted, by the suggestion that it might be led by any other. Not that public leadership is formally closed to the man of genius, the man of exceptional wisdom, the man anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows. He may indeed "arrive," but only on conditions. The conditions are that he must become a politician, graduate in the school of electioneering, enter Parliament, seek office, and so work his way to the front until at last he is acknowledged as a "public leader." Save on these conditions the best he can hope to attain is the second row—which confers the right to criticise the leaders but not the right to lead. The tale of the men of genius who have accepted these conditions and been spoiled by them would fill a large volume. The tale of those who have refused to accept them would fill a larger volume still.

And what shall we say of international

affairs ? Do we find in this wider field any signs that the fixed idea is giving way ? On the contrary, we find it more insistent, more obstinate than ever. International life is conceived in precisely the same terms as "public life" at home, and international leadership is assigned to precisely the same class of persons, who have graduated in the same school and are dominated by the same fixed idea.

"What is the League of Nations ?" asked Mr Balfour, as reported in the *Times* of February 13, 1920. "The League of Nations," he answered, "is exactly the same gentlemen who sat together in Paris from January to November 1919, exactly the same gentlemen called by a different name—the Prime Ministers of the leading countries." So far as these words throw any light upon the matter, the main difference between national and international politics would appear to be that while in the former you have only one Prime Minister, in the latter you have a syndicate of them.

Mr Balfour's statement is unfortunately true. But it will convey very little comfort to those who believe, as some of these "Prime Ministers" have themselves been insisting, that the success

of the League of Nations depends on "a change of heart." Prime Ministers have their merits, but when changes of heart are demanded they are hardly the men to lead the world. If any Prime Minister in Europe were to change his heart—M. Poincaré, for example—the whole electioneering edifice of his party would go to pieces, and he would be turned out of office. And the same holds true of Ministers in general.

The League of Nations, as defined by Mr Balfour in terms of Prime Ministers, gives the popular idea of it, as essentially an affair of government, a political enterprise, an extended or international version of the machinery which each nation has created for itself by setting up law and order within its own borders, to be worked on the international scale by men who have been accustomed to working it on the national scale. A League which was not dominated by Prime Ministers, and not constructed in terms of votes, elections, assemblies, legislatures, law courts, and police, and not manned by diplomatists, Foreign Office experts, and gentlemen dependent on the fortunes of electioneering, would not be a League at all.

Such is the orthodox faith. It betrays the political obsession at every point.

If further confirmation is needed, we have only to study the actual constitution of the League as embodied in the Covenant. A sentence is enough to describe its nature. It is *of* politicians, *by* politicians, *for* politicians ; an instrument created by political operators, and which none but political operators could control.

But is it not possible to view internationalism—I use the word in a sense applicable to every believer in a League of Nations—in a different light ? May it not be that the League is an opportunity, given at the moment when most needed, for breaking away into a new atmosphere altogether ? Instead of borrowing our ideas from the political State, and reproducing the methods of current politics with all their dangers, and actually employing the very men who represent our combative nationalism, should we not rather aim at a new model of community life, founded on the broadest conceptions of human good ? And might we not reasonably expect that this new and better model, set up on higher ground, would in course of time

become a type to which existing governments and the men who control them would gradually learn to conform? In short, instead of the political State being a model for the League of Nations, might not the League of Nations become a model for the political State?

Some of us have long thought that these things are possible. The League of Nations, in our view of it, is not an extended version of national government; it is not, as patriotism likes to think, the British Empire writ large; it is not a scheme of law, order, and police blown out to international proportions. It is a different type of association, demanding new ideas, new habits of thought, new lines of action, and, above all, new *men*. It is a great experiment in humanism, requiring for its service humanists who have retained their humanism unwarped by electioneering and diplomacy. We dream of the League as an instrument for organising the nations on the lines of the *things which matter most in human life*, to be guided by men who have proved their wisdom in the understanding of these things. We think that internationalism has much higher and wider aims than repressive measures against war,

and that it is only by making these greater aims paramount *from the beginning* that the nations will ever learn to live in peace with one another.

In short, the League we dream of would be independent of the fortunes of political persons, political parties, political creeds, and instead of tying it up with electioneering interests, and inviting electioneers to control it, we would strike out into regions that are less exposed to the desolating inroads of vote-catching operations—regions of science, knowledge, culture, economics, finance, industry, education, art, beauty, joy. In these things we draw nearer to the *realities* of human life, upon which must be laid the foundations for the community of mankind if such a consummation is ever to come into being—as we greatly hope, but are not, as yet, assured of.



## THE DEGRADATION OF POLICY

IN times not long ago, when Comte and Herbert Spencer were the chief stars of the intellectual firmament, the question uppermost in high controversy was whether science or religion would become the dominant power in human affairs. So far as religion was concerned, the question seemed even then to have settled itself. Since the break-up of the authority of the Church in the sixteenth century, religion, whatever power it might retain in private life, had been losing ground as a determining factor in high politics. Thus the way was open for a new guiding principle; it was clearly demanded, and the question was as to the competence of science to play the part. General opinion was favourable to its claims. Science was the horse on which the mid-Victorian spirit found itself more and more tempted to put its money, of

which there was great abundance, but without the knowledge of what to do with it. Largely through the influence of Spencer, we were entertained with the dream of a coming age when scientific principles and knowledge would regulate, not only the conduct of the individual man, but the conduct of States, of Governments, of public affairs. A number of sciences designed for that end came into being, of which political economy held the key. Bentham constructed a science of law; Mill followed with a science of liberty; Walter Bagehot wrote *The Science of Politics*; and meanwhile Spencer was sketching his sociology as the coming synthesis of them all. We began to look forward to a reign of sociologists; we pictured the future candidate for Parliament as a man who had taken "honours" in sociology, and Parliament itself as a great committee of sociological experts, legislating for a sociologically enlightened public, that would tolerate nothing which was not sociologically sound.

In all this, of course, religion had hardly a word to say; but the public had long been accustomed to that, and preferred, on the whole, that the pretence of religion should be

abandoned in a region where everybody knew it had ceased to have effective power. On many grounds this dream of the coming reign of science was not unattractive, and although it might appear ignoble when compared with the Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians, and although it drew upon itself the scorn of Ruskin and many a lashing sarcasm from Carlyle, one is still tempted to say of it that a worse thing might have happened to the world.

Be that as it may, the scientific millennium has not come to pass; nor at the moment are the signs apparent that it will come to pass in the near future. The fact is that a third power, which was active even while this debate was at its height—a power which is almost as little related to science as to religion—has risen into prominence and gained the ascendancy over both of them. The common name for it is “policy.” So far as the world can be said to be ruled by anything—and it would be stretching compliments to say that it is—this is the ruling power. What policy means may be hard to define, but it certainly means something of immense importance to the mind of the age—something, at all events, of immensely greater importance

than either science or religion. It is policy that the public expects and respects ; to policy it trusts its fortunes ; on policy it stakes its hopes. Were it proved of a Cabinet Minister that he had neither science nor religion, few people would think much the worse of him. But what should we say if it were proved that he had no policy ?

Is it not a fact that we attach more importance to parliaments than to laboratories, and to prime ministers than to popes ? Do we not spend far more time in making speeches than in saying our prayers ? Are we not more excited about the secrets of cabinets than about the secrets of nature ? In the speeches that are made on the eve of a general election, in the " platforms " that are built, in the programmes put forward, in the promises made, how rarely you discover a trace of the scientific spirit, to say nothing of the religious ! How seldom is science or religion so much as mentioned ! How often the word " policy " comes in ! By policy we plan our New Jerusalems, and by voting we bring them into existence. Such is the orthodox *credo* of the day.

I am aware that this sharp distinction

between policy on the one hand and science and religion on the other is what is commonly called "unphilosophical." I hear the reader reminding me that policy, after all, is only a name for the application in public affairs of truths which have a scientific or a religious basis, or perhaps both. This unquestionably is the right philosophical view of the matter. But the actual conduct of our public affairs does not reflect a philosophical view, and it is policy in being, and not the philosophy of politics, of which I am writing. Whatever theoretical connections may exist between policy, science, and religion, there can be no doubt as to which of them in practice is the predominant partner.

A striking example was afforded some time ago in the discussion about the feeding of Germany. This was generally approved, both by statesmen and by the newspaper press, though not without a good deal of previous hesitation, and with a certain shamefacedness when it came to the point. But, with a few notable exceptions, neither our statesmen nor our press supported the feeding of Germany on grounds that could be called either religious,

moral, or scientific. It was a fine opportunity for them to show their religion, or their morals, or their science, if they had any one of the three. All three were conspicuous by absence. Again and again one read in speeches and articles of that time, until the refrain became quite sickening, that Germany must indeed be fed, but *not* on moral grounds, *not* on sentimental grounds, *not* on humanitarian grounds—as if any reference to these things would have immediately discredited the whole argument—but on grounds of *policy*; which meant, of course, when translated from the language of current hypocrisy into plain speech, that unless we fed the victim up in good time, we should find him all skin and bones when he came to be roasted. A public spirit which argues or permits itself to be argued with in this way is as far removed from the spirit of science as it is from that of religion. : Atrocious as such an argument would be from the point of view of the Gospel, it would be idiotic from that of Bentham or Spencer.

But particular instances need not be laboured. To the least attentive observer it must be obvious that policy, as expressed in

contemporary politics, is far too much at the mercy of caprice, ignorance, and passion, far too entangled in a net of intrigue, far too closely allied with Machiavellian arts, far too dependent on parliamentary stress of weather, far too deeply involved in the erratic fortunes of eminent persons, to be either scientific or religious in any intelligible sense of the term. Our notions of policy have developed in other company. They express the ideals of an acquisitive society; they reflect the cupidity of nations, groups, and classes; they are compromised by vote-catching interests; they are entangled in the arts of electioneering; they are contaminated with every kind of personal and party ambition. The fruits are confusion.

Political scepticism is on the increase. There is a growing suspicion that the destinies of nations are not safe, and can never be safe, so long as they are at the mercy of the "policies" which the official mind originates and directs. Men are coming to view our present distractions as the result of a long-drawn-out attempt to rule the world in that manner, and to believe that, whatever refinements or improvements of it

may be effected, they will merely shift the seat of strife, and not destroy the causes. The belief is growing that the "policy" of the world lies at the mercy of a group of false ideas and mistaken methods, of which strife and bloodshed are, sooner or later, the outcome. This goes far deeper than any question as to the merits of democracy *versus* autocracy. Under the one system as under the other, statesmanship has lost touch with the great ideals of mankind, with the great motives of community life, with the *souls* of nations; policy has degenerated into the manipulation of selfish motives; diplomacy has become a thing apart from reality; and men are beginning to ask whether voting, elections, parliaments, law courts, and police, whether national or international, are the last words when the common good is in question. Hence a profound and universal unrest.

Thus the political sceptic finds nothing to be gained by extending and perpetuating, in a league of nations, the political systems, methods, ideas, and traditions which, in his view, have brought us into the present sea of troubles. It is an attempt to integrate elements whose



very nature is to fly asunder, to secure peace for an enterprise which is essentially one of strife. He distrusts, not only the system, but still more the type of mind, of personality, of leadership which has become the recognised exponent of these things, and regards both the system and the mind which works it as not big enough, either morally or intellectually, for governing such a world as ours. The political State he finds too deeply committed to the spirit of combative nationalism ever to become a model for the federation of free peoples. This, if ever it comes, will not be a larger version of any of them, or the common measure of them all, but a community of a different type. The next step forward will be in a new direction.

But political scepticism is not a mere bundle of negations. It has a positive aim, which is this: that the League should make itself the interpreter and guide of human culture; that it should devise its form for that purpose; that instead of basing itself on a refinement of the discredited policies of the past, it should become, in its corporate capacity, the organ of ideals in consonance with the awakened con-

science of mankind. This would not be yielding to revolution; for, let it be noted, the discontents of which I have spoken, infinitely dangerous when they are left unguided and uninterpreted, cease to be revolutionary just in so far as means are found for their orderly expression.

To find such means is, I suggest, the paramount business which a league of nations should undertake. But they will not be found so long as the nations are treated as wealth-seeking units, and ingenuity is confined to devising the machinery which is to check the sordid scramble at the point where it threatens to break out into war. The negative ideal of not fighting is preposterously inadequate for the League of Nations, not only because it lacks all positive content, but still more because it involves the absurdity of imposing peace on motives whose very nature is to fight, while the motives themselves are left in being to chafe at their new restraints. A league so occupied would merely sit upon the chief safety-valve of the modern State; for it is a fact, deplore it as we may, that war has hitherto been the only means the wealth-making empires of the world

possessed for letting off, at intervals, the explosive forces that are for ever being generated by "something rotten" in the state of acquisitive society. To be worthy of the ideals which have called it into being, to be worthy even of its name, the League must concern itself directly with the things that give value, meaning and dignity to human life. Save in so far as it is able to propose for the nations in concert some higher object than any single State has ever proposed for itself, the world has no use for it. Its true function is to give meaning to what has hitherto been the meaningless life of industrial civilisation, to lift it out of the slough of its sordid motives, and to set it at last on the path of humane culture.

Granting, what I would not deny, that the first task is to placate the present storm by making the best peace the circumstances permit of,<sup>1</sup> yet in the terms of that peace, in the manner of its imposition, in the gesture which accompanies the deed, the whole world is looking for signs that a new and higher motive is in being. It is precisely at this point that a single noble sentiment, a single generous im-

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1919.

pulse, a single magnanimous word, would count for more as a peace-making force than the most skilful adjustments of rival interests and the most formidable penalties against breakers of the peace that the political draughtsman could devise. If none of this appears, if the new "policy" is nothing more than a new tune played on the old strings of combative nationalism, we shall soon have reason to wish that the "peace" had never been heard of. The greatest opportunity which statesmanship has ever had for regaining the lost confidence of the peoples will have been thrown away, and the political mind, as it now exists, will have once more demonstrated its incompetence for the task of pacification. After which the deluge.

It is perhaps inevitable that the League of Nations should begin its existence on the political plane, as an instrument designed for restraining the forces that hurt and destroy, as an experiment in "government" working by the familiar modes of voting, elections, parliaments, law courts, and police. It might conceivably have begun otherwise—for example, in a form more analogous to the Church than

to the political State—and unquestionably it would have begun in that manner but for certain accidents of history. But the facts of the situation must be accepted, and it is idle to speculate on what would have happened if the League had originated more from the desire of the nations to save their souls and less from the desire to confirm their conquests in perpetuity.

But though the way lies through politics, the goal is beyond them, and it is impossible that the start should be rightly made unless the goal is kept steadily in view. This is not merely to restrain the forces that make for war, but to do a far greater thing—to *liberate the forces that make for peace*. In all nations there are at this moment immense reserves of these forces, repressed or misdirected or unused, but waiting to be enlisted and combined for common achievement in the manifold arts, interests and pursuits that give man his vocation on this planet. This work of liberation, enlistment, and redirection, conceived as a co-operative task on a world-wide basis, is the function of a league of nations. To form it for any purpose less than this is to form it in vain.

Such a conception, remote as it may seem from the problems of the hour, has immense value in helping us to solve them. It defines the spirit in which the *beginning* must be made. Magnanimity is demanded at the outset, while meanness, rapacity and revenge are ruled out as absolutely fatal. An arrangement, however ingeniously contrived, which lacks the first quality and displays the others, is off the track a league of nations has to follow. A league of conquerors, for example, dominated by the habits of mind which conquest invariably engenders, cannot, under any conceivable circumstances, develop into a genuine fraternity of free peoples ; it would be a false start, and its psychology, to say nothing of its morals, would condemn it. Even as keeper of the peace a league of conquerors will not succeed. Nor do we make its failure the less assured by baptising it a league of nations.

In an article contributed to the *Harvard Theological Review*,<sup>1</sup> Dr F. G. Peabody draws the distinction between *peace-making* and *peace-keeping*, and reminds us that the blessing of the gospel is pronounced on the peace-

<sup>1</sup> January 1919.

*makers*. Indeed, the two things are by no means the same, although often confused. They employ different methods and have different ideals, of which the ideal of the peace-maker is incomparably the higher. While the peace-keeper is engaged with the negative object of preventing strife, the peace-maker has the positive aim of promoting fellowship. "Thou shalt not fight" is the motto of the one; "Thou shalt co-operate" is the motto of the other. The methods of the peace-keeper invariably end in the resort to law courts and police; the peace-maker, on the other hand, works by a method which includes all that the peace-keeper sets out to accomplish, and a great deal more. He says nothing about peace-keeping, and may seem at first sight to be indifferent to it; but by engaging men in positive co-operations he sets their relations on a footing where the peace is kept automatically. In this he shows himself a good psychologist. For while, broadly speaking, all men and all nations desire to be at peace with one another, none of them desires *to be kept* at peace by the rest; or, more strictly speaking, while some are willing to play the

part of peace-keepers to the others, all are unwilling that others should play the part of peace-keepers to them. Thus, by its very nature, peace-keeping is an irritating topic, which can hardly be introduced without sowing the seeds of new recalcitrancy and discord. Many of the great conquerors of the world have loved to exhibit themselves in the rôle of peace-keepers, and many great wars have originated from the notions which such men entertain of the methods by which peace is to be kept.

So the peace-maker avoids this dangerous topic as much as he can. He promotes the idea of mutual service ; he enriches the world with the arts of co-operation ; he invents devices for bearing the common burden ; he institutes communities of knowledge ; he founds schools, and would, if he had his way, turn the whole world into a university of high achievement, where men and nations might learn day by day their need of each other's help. His manners correspond to his methods. He is neither artful nor repressive, but frank, pitiful and magnanimous ; for he knows how true it is of nations, as of individuals, that *tout*



*savoir est tout pardonner.* Such is the peace-maker, and it is only by following him that the world will ever be *kept* at peace.

The great weakness of the propaganda for a league of nations lies in the fact that it has seldom risen beyond the level of the peace-keeping conception. A fatality, born of our limited notions of policy, has confined thought to this lower ground. Hence it is that the League, backed though it be by the desire of all nations *to be* at peace, has to reckon with the unwillingness of every nation *to be kept* at peace by the others; an unwillingness which is clearly revealed in the tendency of each of the Great Powers to make some exception in its own favour—sea-power for Britain, the Monroe Doctrine for America, and so on—which leaves it virtually the master of its own actions. Whether or not America would consent to aid in keeping the peace of Europe, I take it as certain that she would never consent *to be kept at peace by Europe* if her own honour and ideals, as she interprets them to herself, required her to go to war. Nor would Europe in similar circumstances suffer herself to be kept at peace by America. How could any

nation which has reached moral maturity enter into such an engagement ? And how can the morally mature nations impose it on the morally immature, unless at the same time they reciprocally impose it upon one another ? Material interests apart, such a concession, made by a mature nation, would be tantamount to the loss of its sovereign right to be, in the last resort, the author of its own conduct.

Clearly another way must be found ; and the way indicated is that of the *peace-maker*. As a mere *peace-keeping* institution in the sense indicated, the League of Nations is doomed to be a disastrous failure ; for it will provoke far more quarrels than it will either prevent or allay. Not until we conceive its functions in terms of *peace-making* shall we begin to understand what it is we have set ourselves to accomplish.

We shall not greatly err if, for the time being, we dismiss political considerations from our minds and think of the League as an enterprise in international *education*, whose first business is to introduce the elements of mutual trust, understanding, and goodwill into the

prevailing chaos of barbaric motives. Frankly, I would attach more importance to a scheme for the establishment of international universities, open to all classes and especially to the workers, than to the most formidable machinery for policing the world, if only because it strikes the note of education, indicates the need of creating the international mind, and so carries us away from the ground dominated by the malign spirit of traditional diplomacy and the arts of the politician. Four hundred years ago Europe was far more of a living unity than it has been since; and it owed its unity in no small measure to the splendid influence of the men who went forth into all lands from its international universities, where they had been educated as citizens of the world. The same thing might be repeated to-day on an immensely vaster scale. Nor would patriotism suffer the smallest loss.

Again, taking a wider view, if we think of the League as the beginning of a concerted crusade by all nations against the inhuman mechanism, the base acquisitiveness, the low morals and vile habits of mind which are now covered by the word "policy"; if we think

of it as an effort to dismiss the standard of *quantity* and erect the standard of *quality* over the whole field of industrial life, and so provide man with a vocation that is worthy of him—the world-organ of a revolution against the reign of cupidity, ugliness, squalor—in short, a redemptive and not a mere preventive enterprise, do we not see in a movement so conceived guarantees of peace a thousand times more effectual than any crusade against war can promise ?

Anything which moves on these lines may be welcomed, and hailed as the dawn of a new day. The march of events will doubtless provide many opportunities. Possibly, nay probably, we may find ourselves before long in presence of a threat to the whole fabric of industrial civilisation due to the humiliating fact that the follies of the world have brought it to a financial precipice. Even that may be a blessing in disguise. Co-operation forced upon the nations by the need to save themselves from bankruptcy may prove the beginning of co-operation in endless other forms. And yet it were better not to wait until action is forced upon them by the onset of calamity.

We need *a league of ideas* to furnish the League of Nations with aim, spirit, and form : the religious idea, the moral, the educational, the economic, and—let it be granted—the political. Of this mixed company the political idea is not the one that I would select as destined to play the chief part in founding a brotherhood of free peoples. Under happier auspices the political idea might indeed have become the summary of all the rest. It has not. It has degenerated, until the word “policy,” on the lips of nine persons out of ten who use it, conveys no higher conception than the astute adjustment of selfish motives operating in the struggle for power. Such a conception, whatever use it may have in other spheres, and whatever skill in draughtsmanship it may command in this, is utterly inadequate for the work of reconciliation and fraternity. In this connection it is worse than useless; it is disastrous, and if allowed to dominate the councils of the nations at this juncture, it will only wake the sleeping dogs.

Yet this, alas ! is the obsession of the official mind, the fetish of all the vested interests in the world. “Policy” has proved a broken reed

in every great crisis of history : and though the nations have suffered their destinies to fall into its power for a time, they are learning to know it for what it is, and every deeper tendency of the age is in revolt against its domination.

The idea is widely prevalent that, because the problem of pacification is so vast, so complex, so involved in selfish interests and dangerous passions, it will tolerate no moral idealism, but must be solved by strict and exclusive regard to "policy." This essay is intended to suggest the opposite. Just because the problem is so vast, so complex, so involved in selfish interests and dangerous passions, I plead that moral idealism is the only force that can save us. We are in the presence of an immense entanglement which must be cut through by the sword of the spirit. We are in deep waters, and the astute political mind is utterly out of its depth. The whole world is crying out for moral idealism ; the demand for a league of nations is the expression of its desire. We wait for this highest thing as they that wait for the morning ; and whenever

the gleams of it appear on the horizon, as they do from time to time, there is a deep response from the hearts of millions, and the hopes revive which "policy" has well-nigh crushed.

## THE VALIDITY OF INTERNATIONAL COMPACTS

IN the late years of tension, turmoil, and desperation we have witnessed the spread of a doctrine which may be called—without prejudice to others similarly named—the doctrine of Salvation by International Compact. Future historians will doubtless have something interesting to say about the causes which led to the development of a doctrine so intrinsically remarkable; and also, perhaps, about its general validity.

The essence of it seems to be that the peace of mankind, with its attendant blessings, can be kept by the simple device of a compact between governments to keep it. Among the many doctrines of salvation offered to a troubled world none has been more ardently believed in. And yet there is none that stands more urgently in need of criticism.



Whenever an international compact is under consideration, whether in the partial form of the Treaty of Versailles, or in the universal form contemplated by the League of Nations, two questions arise which need to be kept apart. The first is the question of framing the compact, of getting it made. The second is the question of *keeping* it when made. The first is difficult, but the second immensely more so. What are the chances, the probabilities, that any international compact, between such governments as those that now exist on the earth, will be *kept* by the nations which, through the action of their governments, have been committed to it ?

It is a remarkable fact that this question is seldom raised among the believers in Salvation by International Compact. The common assumption is, that when the governments concerned have come to an agreement and signed their compact the business will virtually be done. Against this, however, may be set a remark overheard after the conference at Genoa. "Thank God there has been no agreement. For if there had been, it would have been broken in a month and we should have had another

row." Possibly the author of this remark had grasped a point which seems to have escaped a good many of his contemporaries—that a world "safe for democracy" may be, at the same time, radically unsafe for international compacts, in fact the unsafest of all possible worlds for *them*. All depends on the relations existing between the democratic governments and the nations behind them on whose behalf the compacts are made. In some instances these relations are highly precarious.

The validity of an international compact obviously assumes that each and all of the contracting governments have sufficient authority in their own houses to ensure the adhesion of their nationals to the engagements made. Of how many existing governments can it be said that they possess this power? None of them possess it without qualifications which go far to imperil their engagements. In the Treaty of Versailles, for example, the representatives of Great Britain pledged the nation to terms which have never satisfied public opinion, while Mr Wilson's signature was promptly repudiated by the American people. But if this is the position of the strongest among

democratic governments, what shall we say of the weakest ? Is it not obvious, for example, that official acceptance of the terms by the government of Germany was quite worthless, for this reason, if for no other, that the said government lacked the power to compel the German people to submit to the exactions demanded, even assuming that the people were fully able to bear them ? The power of compulsion which the old German government possessed over its nationals did not exist, and does not exist at the present moment, in the new one. The instance is no doubt extreme, but certainly not peculiar. No existing democratic government is in a position to guarantee that its signature to a compact will be continuously honoured by the people on whose behalf it signs.

Of all this, little account seems to be taken in current discussion of these matters, and none at all by fanatical believers in Salvation by International Compact. In most of the schemes that have been put forward for a league of nations, including that embodied in the Covenant, the contracting "States" are treated as having unlimited power to carry out

their engagements or, what amounts to the same thing, to compel their nationals to do so. But there are no such "States." In the strongest of them there is a strict limit to the extent of the obligations which governments can safely undertake on behalf of their constituencies with a reasonable prospect that they will be sustained. In the weakest of them the power to do this is virtually non-existent. *Of half the governments now existing in Europe, it is no exaggeration to say that their signatures are worthless.* They lack the power to complete their contracts. It was Signor Nitti who signed the Covenant for Italy. But Signor Nitti has vanished from high politics. We are now dealing with Signor Mussolini.

Of late we have had plenty of object-lessons indicating the lion in the path. Since the end of the war a whole series of international compacts, of wider or narrower scope, have been duly signed, sealed, and delivered by representatives of the "Powers"—a term which appears to be somewhat of a misnomer in this connection—the Treaty of Versailles, the Treaty of St Germain, the Treaty

of Trianon, the Treaty of Sèvres, not to speak of "agreements" of one kind or another drawn up at various "conferences." What has become of them? The Treaty of Versailles has been crumbling from the moment it came into existence. Trianon and St Germain are virtually forgotten. Sèvres has been smashed to pieces. Their authors are here to-day and gone to-morrow. Had the signatories been kings, or emperors, ruling over submissive peoples, the arrangements made might have lasted at least a few years. Made by such governments as made them, their validity was bound to decline.

Before salvation can be wrought by an international compact of governments, partial or complete, the relations between governments and the peoples behind them will have to be very different from what they are. Such compacts will doubtless continue to be *made*, but they will not be *kept*, which is tantamount to saying that it were better not to make them at all. Some deeper form of representation will have to be found by which a government, acting in international affairs on behalf of a people, can express what is permanent and

lasting in that people's will. And the change must take place not in one nation only but in all, for in this matter the chain is no stronger than its weakest link: the presence of one weak or treacherous member in a group of contracting powers imperils the whole contract. Failing this condition—and at present there is no prospect of its being fulfilled—the alternative remains of finding some other means, some other organ, by which nations can co-operate in the field of their common interests. Immense possibilities in this direction are waiting to be explored—by economists, by men of business, by men of science, by men of religion, by educationalists, by representatives of art, philosophy, and culture. When the League of Nations becomes a living fact perhaps it may turn out to be *not* a League of *Governments* at all.

## A WAY ROUND

IF we put these two characteristics together—first, the essential precariousness of democratic governments; second, the war-made form and martial psychology of the modern State—we have before us the chief reasons for doubting whether the political State is a good model for the future community of mankind. Certainly not a good model to have exclusively in mind, nor perhaps primarily. I will not go the length of saying that the political State has no place whatever in these speculations, and ought to be dismissed entirely. But the international mind must refuse to tie itself down to the political model as if *that alone* would solve the problem. The internationalist must hold himself free, at this point, to consider the claims of other models of community life, of which there are many, and to examine them impartially. Perhaps he will find

among them one or more, capable of a world-wide development, which, if developed on a world-wide scale, would bring him nearer to the final unification of mankind.

We need some means of promoting internationalism which will not involve, as our present methods are doing, an immediate collision with the principle of nationality, everywhere combative and powerful. As everybody knows, or ought to have learned by this time, combative nationalism blocks the way—blocks it with innumerable questions of sovereign rights, which is a political difficulty ; blocks it with the resolute demand of every mature nation to be the guardian of its own honour, which is a moral difficulty ; blocks it with armaments, which is a diabolical difficulty.

But is there no way round this formidable obstacle which, in the meantime, may be left standing and unchallenged ?

The way round is, indeed, a long one, but a long way which leads to our goal is better than a short one which leads to a bottomless abyss. And may we not take it as axiomatic that no short-cut exists to the goal which the international mind has in view ?



I proceed, then, to enumerate some of these other models of community life which the internationalist should study ; not, indeed, as though any one of them, by itself, would provide him with a perfect type of what he is seeking, but yet suggesting that each will give him some hint of a working principle, and that, by combining the principles that he learns from all of them, he will be able to evolve a coherent idea.

1. The Trade Union, or the Community of Labour.

2. The Friendly Society, or the Community of Insurance.

3. The University, or the Community of Learning.

4. The Guild of Fine Arts, or the Community of Excellence.

5. The Social Club, or the Community of Friendship.

6. The Church, or the Community of Faith.

7. The Family, or the Community of Love.

8. The Political State, or the Community of Government.

The programme of internationalism, as I ask the reader to conceive it, begins its activities on lines suggested by the first seven

of these models and ends with the activities suggested by the eighth. It differs, therefore, from the plans now most in favour, not by excluding political activity, but by leaving it to the last. It differs yet more widely from the type of internationalism which thinks exclusively in political terms and is incapable of thinking in any others. The difference is one of method, not of aim or of principle. The aim is still the fraternity of the nations; the principle is that of reciprocal goodwill. But the order of procedure is turned round, that being taken last which is usually taken first, and the first last.

Let us, then, take a glance at the seven models of community life—a glance only; to do them full justice, a volume would have to be devoted to each.

1. *The Trade Union, or Community of Labour.*—The principle of trade unionism is collective bargaining. It suggests the extension and development of collective bargaining on international lines. This process has long been recognised in commercial treaties and otherwise, but is capable of being carried very much further. The interchange of products between

different countries, known as import and export, now a most complicated and wasteful operation, might gradually be reduced to a series of summary bargains between the major units concerned ; these bargains to be conducted by constituted bodies in which labour would be represented along with capital, and the consumer with the producer. For example, the exchange of American wheat against the manufactured products of Manchester or Bradford, which now involves thousands of transactions, would then be effected by a relatively small group of transactions. It would be in principle a collective bargain between American farmers and English manufacturers. The working out of such a scheme is, of course, a problem for expert science, as are nearly all the other matters to which I shall refer ; but the data are actually in existence which render a gradual solution within the bounds of possibility.

It may be said that we are here on low ground, that bargaining is a mercenary process which should be ended rather than mended. I should be sorry to think so. A sounder view is that of Richard Cobden, who held that the *ideal bargain* is one of the most effective means in

existence of reconciling the conflicting interests of men. A fraudulent bargain is among the worst things in the world ; an honest bargain is among the best. It marks the end of a conflict and the beginning of a partnership. It is the creation of a common interest out of two interests originally divergent, or at least separate. Ideal bargaining promotes co-operation, and even friendship, between individuals and between nations. The more collective it becomes, the more does it approach its ideal form.

Great as are the advances that have been made up to date in the art of bargaining, it still remains susceptible of immense development. In certain directions it has reached already a high degree of perfection, as in the best practice of banking. But even here there are openings for international extension. For example, there is no reason, none at least in theory, why the nations should not create an International Bank, which would do for the credit of all nations what the Bank of England does in sustaining the credit of the British Empire. An International Bank would enormously facilitate collective bargaining on a large scale, and would be a step

forward toward unity of purpose in the general life of industrial civilisation.

2. *The Friendly Society, or Community of Insurance.*<sup>1</sup>—The principle of a community of insurance is that of bearing one another's burdens, which most people will agree has something to do with the Kingdom of God. The characteristics of such a community—they may be found in any fire or life insurance company—are that the insuring members respect each other's rights, guard each other's property, and desire each other's welfare. Here again a number of divergent interests are combined into a common interest. The burdens are pooled, the risks are combined, and both burden and risk are so distributed as enormously to diminish the hardships of human life. Imagine that extended to the international scale—the burdens of *the nations* so pooled, their risks so combined, as to make it the interest of each nation to respect the rights of all, to guard the property of all, and to desire the welfare of all. The thing is not beyond the resources of actuarial science, one of the most highly developed of the sciences ; and at this point I

<sup>1</sup> I owe all this to the late Professor Royce.

would rather trust the fortunes of internationalism to the actuaries, who have a science, than to the politicians, who have none.

At the present moment, for example, all the nations engaged in the late war are staggering under an enormous burden of debt. For some the burden is so crushing that it cannot be separately borne; and since in these matters the credit of all nations is closely interlocked, the impending bankruptcy of some threatens the solvency of all. But while many of them cannot be borne singly, they might conceivably be borne in common. Nay, they *ought* to be borne in common—for reasons sufficiently obvious.

A new community of insurance is foreshadowed—a Friendly Society on the international scale. Whether it would deal first with the danger of bankruptcy, which is the outstanding danger of the world at the moment, or with the danger of war, or with any other of the many risks which the nations run in common, need not occupy us now. Enough that, if the method were applied to any one of these risks, it would rapidly extend to others; and, in so doing, would spread a network of equitable, humane,

and scientifically exact relations over the face of the earth.

3. *The University, or Community of Learning.*

—The principle here is the universality of knowledge, the catholicity of truth. In the world of knowledge, communism is a natural law. Rank, status, race, nationality count for nothing. Whatever you have, you give; and you gain more by sharing it with others. Here there is no mine *or* thine, but, only mine *and* thine; for nothing is mine unless it is thine also. Internationalise *that*. Let every university become, so far as it can, what many universities were in bygone ages, international. Interchange your teachers, interchange your students, and see that working men form a large part of them. The universities of the world are for the internationalist a huge undeveloped estate. They are full of possibilities, pointing in the direction of co-operative effort, among the men of all nations, to extend the field of knowledge, to distribute its splendid products, and to ensure that these shall be applied, not, as they have been so largely heretofore, to purposes of mutual destruction, but to the promotion of the common good. Until a seat

of learning has become international, its claim to be called a university is hardly complete, for it is not universal.

4. *The Guild of Fine Arts, or Community of Excellence.*—The principle here is the value of good workmanship, both for the products it yields and for the education of those who produce them. What a Community of Excellence sets out to achieve is not quantity, but quality. *There is no reason why the whole industrial world, this world of factories and "goods," should not become, in its distant and ultimate issue, a Community of Excellence.*

There are two kinds of labour. There is one kind which is mere drudgery, a curse, an evil to be compensated by wages, a thing of which you must say that the less a man has of it the better for the man. This is the kind which is most plentiful in the world at the present moment, and because there is so much of it we have what is known as the "Labour Problem." But there is another kind which is skilled, creative and delightful, a privilege, an education, a thing of which the more a man has the better for him. That is *true* labour, that is labour as it should be, and the greatest need



of our times is to foster and increase it, thereby gradually diminishing that other kind, which is a burden and a misfortune to all who perform it, no matter how highly they may be paid for so doing. Whenever a man appears in any nation who has that aim, let him be hailed as a brother in arms by every other man who has the same aim. Let all such work together across the bounds of nationality ; let the international labour movement concentrate on Excellence, on increasing the labour which is a blessing and diminishing that which is a curse ; let them lay the foundations of a world-wide Labour Party, whose motto shall be, not, as now, " the minimum of work and the maximum of pay," but rather "*that every man shall enjoy his day's work and a good article come out at the end of it.*" Here, also, are immense possibilities which internationalism, up to now, has hardly touched. When nations or men compete for quantity, their competition makes them enemies ; when nations or men compete for quality, their competition makes them friends.

5. *The Social Club, or Community of Friendship.*—The principle is the value of personal

intercourse on common ground. The anti-thesis of the club is the modern hotel, where you are known, not by your name, but by your number, and where you may remain for days in close proximity to hundreds of other "numbers" similar to yourself without exchanging one friendly word with any one of your fellow-numbers.

What kind of international activity, then, does the Social Club suggest? Let no man smile when he hears the answer. It suggests a reform of the habits and conditions of modern travel. The habits of the modern traveller might have been acquired for the express purpose of preventing men of different nations from getting to know one another. I have known men who have spent years in travelling, visiting half the countries in the world, and have not made a single *friend* in any one of them; ignorant of any language but their own, and often speaking that in a manner which the foreign linguist cannot understand; treated by the inhabitants of the countries they passed through as mere goods in transit, or as perambulating money-bags to be duly drained; gazed at as moving curiosities; staying in hundreds

of hotels, but never passing a night under any hospitable roof; foreigners more foreign than if they had stayed at home.

I confess that I know not precisely how this astonishing evil is to be remedied. Perhaps the most one can do, at the moment, is to call attention to its existence, and thereby challenge the inventiveness of ingenious minds. It seems a vain thing to hope that the old customs of international hospitality—as they prevailed in the days of Erasmus and Colet, when travellers in foreign lands made friends with the people among whom they travelled—will ever be revived in this age of view-hunting and big hotels. But fancy sometimes plays with the thought that, as civilisation becomes humane and intelligent, the entertainment of the foreigner will be recognised as a public duty. If it were possible—I suppose it is impossible, but there is no harm in playing with these fancies—to set some movement on foot which would ensure that a friendly door should always be open to the stranger in the community he is visiting, and a welcome given him to some family circle, it would do more to promote international understanding on both

sides than many schemes that have been portentously discussed.

6. The Church is the most important of all the non-political models of community life, the one that has the closest bearing on our problem, and at the same time the most difficult to understand aright.

In a previous essay the point was emphasised that whereas complete publicity is the mark of shams, realities are never more than partially exposed to the public gaze. This quality of *hiddenness* reveals the true Church, and at the same time conceals it. No earthly institution could better illustrate our principle that "the reality of things is inversely proportional to the noisiness of their self-announcement."

The Church is the Community of Faith, and the principle at work within it is the Spirit. It differs from all the other communities I have named in being essentially *invisible*. No visible embodiment of it on the earth can do more than give a hint of its true nature. Or, we may say, the invisible part of it must always remain of vastly greater importance than the visible. Neither in the institutions it sets up, nor in the dogmas it teaches, nor in

the ritual it follows, is the true nature of the Church fully revealed. When we hear it named, we think of sacred buildings, of priesthoods, of doctrines, of rites, of Sunday observances, of congregations saying their prayers or listening to sermons. But the Church is built on deeper ground than that. It lies in a world which is not only invisible now, but is destined to remain invisible for ever—the world of ultimate Reality, where men are united with one another, not by any outward bond or formal compact, but by the fact that each in his place and station is loyal to the Highest. The Church is the invisible community of all such.

Of all the ties that bind men together this is the strongest. Compared with this the political State, the League of Nations, nay, the visible Churches themselves, are things of a day. The members of the invisible Church may be unknown to one another by face or by name; how can it be otherwise, when they are to be counted by millions, and include the dead as well as the living? And yet *they are always finding one another out*. Place them where you will, among Jews or Greeks, bond or free,

circumcision or uncircumcision, these faithful souls will reciprocally discover one another, and a new link will be forged in the invisible bond which binds the many into the one.

This is the ultimate formula of internationalism—to develop the secret affinities which enable the faithful in all nations to find one another out, and to realise their community without negotiations, without compact, and without oath. In this sense, but in no sense more restricted than this, the Church is the final model of community life. It includes and explains all the others of which I have spoken. The Community of Labour, the Community of Insurance, the Community of Excellence, the Community of Learning, the Community of Friendship, are all means of bringing mankind together on lower planes in order that, at the last, they may *find one another out* in the invisible community of faithful souls. And when this has been done we reach that highest form of human organisation, which is at the same time the simplest, of which I shall only say that it consists of the Family, or the Community of Love.

I have been asking the reader to exercise his imagination, and must continue to do so. Let him imagine the nations of the world, or even the chief of them, engaging in the six positive activities named above, say for one generation. Take one by one the various models of community life ; mark in each those of its features which are capable of international extension, and then suppose that concerted efforts are being made all round to establish community of labour, community of bargaining, community of insurance, community of excellence, community of learning, community of friendship—and as the last product of them all, community of faith. What do we see ? We see a rapid consolidation of human interests, a continual drawing together of mankind for a united struggle against the adverse forces of Nature, and, therewith, a steady growth of mutual understanding, mutual respect, mutual helpfulness among all nations. We see the passing away of innumerable conflicts, cross-purposes, and absurd misunderstandings. We see, moreover, that an immense process of *education* is going forward—every one of the activities effectively teaching some great lesson of international ethics, the total result

of which is to train men, not by ones or twos or twenties, but by millions, to become citizens of the world.

We see something more important still, which touches vitally on what has been said about the political State, or Community of Government. I remarked at the beginning, and would repeat at the end, that with such human material as now exists on this planet the proposition of world government is altogether unmanageable. The intelligence required to frame its constitution, the foresight to enact its laws, the means to enforce the laws even if enacted, do not exist. But if we imagine the nations pushing forward on the other lines, following the other models, we see at the same time that this problem of government is gradually simplifying itself. We are preparing the ground, we are educating the human material, we are narrowing the area of possible conflict.

A league of nations, even a partial league, *on political lines* is an enormously complex and dangerous affair. Who can doubt it? You may find twenty nations that are willing to set it up; but where will you find one that



is honestly willing to submit to its authority after it has been set up ? America supported the League as long as the question was merely that of setting up the new discipline, but as soon as she realised the precise discipline to which she herself would have to submit, she withdrew. *In the same manner every one of the other consenting Powers will withdraw the moment it is called upon to enforce the ideal of the League against itself.*

This alone is enough to reveal the insuperable difficulties that arise when community of government is insisted on as the first step toward the community life of mankind. But the difficulties begin to vanish when we place that step at the other end. I ask only for one generation of international effort on the lines indicated by the six models. By the end of that time we should have to deal with a set of conditions wholly different from those which now confront us. We should have a better human material to work upon ; new moral forces would have sprung into being ; the number of conflicting interests to be reconciled would have shrunk. The political measures needed to secure the peace of the world would

then assume a relatively simple form. Nay, we might even find that the other unities which had sprung into being were so strong, and so entirely pacific in their action, that world government was no longer needed in any shape, beyond that of a formal ratification of existing fraternities.

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that the non-political models of community life have immense value as growing-points of international unity. I plead for their importance and I plead for their priority. It is they that provide a way round that formidable obstacle of nationality which blocks the way. It is they that promise an education in international ethics, for want of which political internationalism is even now dashing itself to pieces. It is they that enable us to counter the psychological causes of human strife, and liberate the forces which alone can reconcile them.

Such a mode of action would betray that blending of idealism and realism which moves the mountains. Neither realism nor idealism taken separately will carry us far toward the goal. It is the realist who bids

us be content with the present League of Nations *as a beginning*. It is the idealist who asks—the beginning *of what?* The two need to be combined. In combination they will be found irresistible.

## ON MINDING ONE'S OWN BUSINESS

A PERSON who dares, in these days, to say a good word for minding one's own business will find himself exposed to various forms of obloquy. His neighbours will conclude that he is a selfish man in general. If he ventures his plea in public, somebody will charge him with being an advocate of *laissez-faire*, and the inference will be drawn that he is not only indifferent to the sufferings of his fellow-men, but idle. It will also be hinted that he regards himself as a superior person, and mental pictures of him will be evolved in which he will be represented as bidding the whole world go to the devil. Nobody will believe that he is a good citizen or a patriot.

The best citizen, the best patriot I ever knew, was a man whose life was fiercely devoted to

the principle of minding his own business. I have never met a man more industrious, more unselfish, more trustworthy. He had thirteen children, who grew up into stalwart, sober, intelligent and self-respecting men and women, every one contributing necessary service to the world at this moment; five married and mothers of large families, the rest doing skilled work in factories or tilling the land. The man was a shepherd, and his regular wages were eight or shillings a week. To be sure he never talked either about citizenship or patriotism; but he did the thing the rest of us talk about. He neither interfered with other people, nor would he allow them to interfere with him. Because he wanted to mind his own business, that of breeding sheep, he insisted on being left alone. And he left others alone, thus doing unto them precisely as he would they should do unto him. Taken on his own terms, he was agreeable enough and interesting beyond measure. He was excellent company, and deeply religious. But if you interfered with him, especially if you showed the least desire to improve him or do him good, he would turn his back and walk away in wrath.

If all men were like him it would be impossible for anybody to do good to anybody else—except, of course, in secret, which is the way the Bible says it ought to be done. But in that case—if everybody minded his own business as this shepherd did—doing them good in ways that were not secret would often be unnecessary. The reason we have to do so much good in public, to pass so many public laws, and to make so many public speeches, is always, in the last resort, that somebody is not minding his own business. It is a rather humiliating state of things, and suggests that life moves in a vicious circle. Smith causes trouble by not minding his own business ; then Jones has to neglect his in order to set right the trouble caused by Smith ; and then Robinson has to leave his counter in order to straighten things up in Jones's shop—and so it goes on. Hence it is that our morals, politics, and social reforms have much in them to remind us of the process by which the men of Gotham earned their livelihood—they took in one another's washing. It is clear that if everybody would wash his own clothes there would be a general *saute qui peut* among the moralists, politicians, and social

reformers. Their occupation would be largely gone, and they would be reduced to the necessity of having to do good in secret, which some of them would find uncongenial to their habits.

Good citizenship, patriotism, and, indeed, Christianity itself were not well served when "doing good to others" became the war-cry of moralists. These moralists meant well, but they did harm. What they meant to do, of course, was to promote good works all round, in which no doubt they have succeeded—to some extent. But, incidentally, they caused a new division of classes—that, namely, between the people who fancy it their mission to do good, and the "others" to whom good is done. Without intending it, they set up a small aristocracy, which called itself "we," and at the same time they created (in imagination) an enormous moral proletariat known as "others." Any man who wants to neglect his own business can now press the claim that he is one of the "others" whose business ought to be minded for them by somebody else. That is the attitude of the public towards the Government. "You," say the public, addressing the Government, "re-

present the moral aristocracy, who mind other people's business. Behold us, then, who are the 'others' in question. Do us good. Mind our business—for we are disinclined to mind it ourselves. Educate our children. Regulate our wages. Insure us against poverty. Fix prices. Compel us to behave ourselves decently. Put policemen at every street corner."

It is not wholesome for any man to think of himself as one of the "we" who do good to others; he is apt to become a Pharisee without knowing it. Nor is it better for him, but worse, if he think of himself as one of the "others" to whom good is done; he will almost certainly fall into the habit of neglecting his own business, especially if it happens to be difficult. Most of us, it will be found, unconsciously place ourselves in one or other of these two classes. Or rather, we transfer ourselves from the first to the second and *vice versa*, according to the convenience of the moment. If the business we are engaged in is pleasant and costs nothing—such as public agitation, speech-making, devising schemes of social reconstruction—the tendency is to place ourselves among the "we" who go about doing good.



If it is unpleasant, or arduous, or requires abstinence, care, forethought and self-sacrifice—such as properly educating our children or protecting ourselves from poverty in old age—our tendency is to let the business drift and wait till the State steps in and takes it off our hands: we now belong to the “others” to whom good is done.

One may see this curious process actively at work in the discussion about education. The assumption on which it proceeds is that there exists in the community a comparatively small class of persons (“we”) whose part is to educate, and an enormous multitude of persons (“the others”) whose part is to be educated in the manner which “we” consider best. Every one who has a scheme to propose unconsciously reckons himself a member of the small aristocracy represented by the first class; rarely, indeed, do you encounter an educational reformer who shows the faintest suspicion of his own need to be educated. On the other hand, the great mass of the public is so accustomed to be treated in this way that it doesn’t bother its head about education at all. It leaves the whole business, which is really its

own, to be looked after by "we"; though it is not unlikely that when "we" have made their arrangements the public will discover that it has been unwarrantably interfered with, and will repudiate the arrangements "we" have made. That is bad for both parties.

As happens so often, the moralists, with their cry of "do good to others," have got hold of the stick, but by the wrong end. The most effectual way of doing good to others is to mind your own business—the most effectual, but the least showy, for there is nothing in it to indicate to the passers-by that you are a philanthropist. Your conduct will commend itself only to those who honour good done in secret. Assuredly, there is no form of "social service" comparable to that which one can render by doing his job to the very best of his ability. And, contrariwise, the enemies of society are those who scamp their jobs, no matter whether the cause be idleness, stupidity, selfishness, or the benevolent desire to spend one's time in looking after the interests of other people.

One often wonders what the world would be like at the present moment if civilisation had

been grounded from the first on the law of "mind your own business," with less said about doing good to others. I cannot but believe that we should be living in a far better world. There would be less idleness, less inefficiency, less ugliness, less dirt, less shoddy, and, above all, less humbug—less, in short, of everything which darkens the future of mankind. The curse of bad work—the root of the labour problem—would never have lighted on our civilisation. There might not be so many marketable commodities in the world, but what there were would be worth far more. We should be doing each other more good than we can ever hope to do by all that is commonly comprised under "social service." We should entertain a higher respect for our neighbours; for there is nothing that makes you despise a man so completely as the sight of him scamping his job. We should be more united, more sociable, more unselfish, and more willing to pull together. And the Great War would never have taken place. Germany had never learnt to mind her own business and to leave other nations to mind theirs. She claimed the right to impose her culture on the rest of the world

without consulting it, which is precisely what some educational reformers do when they take the "uneducated masses" in hand. In fact, Prussian militarism sought to carry out on the international scale, and to its logical conclusion, the mistake we all commit when we grasp the principle of doing good to others by the wrong end.

I contend, therefore, that the obloquy is undeserved which falls upon the man who believes in minding his own business. He is not an idle person ; he works longer hours than his opponent, and produces a better article. He is not indifferent to the welfare of others ; he does them good in secret all day long. He is not a superior person who bids the whole world go to the devil ; he sees it going to the devil under the influence of the opposite principle and tries to save it by sticking to his post. He is not a selfish man ; he is the true philanthropist, though he never seeks the reputation of being one, and greatly dislikes hearing himself called by that name. He doesn't practise *laissez-faire* ; he leaves that to the people who neglect their own business under the pretext of doing good to others. He is not a troublesome

member of the community; he gives less trouble than anybody else, and at the same time performs more social service than anybody else. His job is not the easiest; it is the hardest, but he makes no fuss about it and seldom complains. Taking him all round, he is the best of good fellows—staunch, neighbourly, cheerful, healthy-minded, unpretentious—a pillar of society in every sense of the term, an excellent citizen and a true patriot. To be sure, he is disagreeable when he finds himself in the midst of talking men, especially if they are talking about social service; but, otherwise, you will find him the most pleasant of companions, and be very glad to have him as a neighbour. He, at all events, is no sham.

## A SOLILOQUY ON VOTING

THE discovery that voting is a better method of settling disputes than fighting is considered the peculiar achievement of the Anglo-Saxon race. Unfortunately it has led to the notion that the settlement of disputes is the essential business of human life, until, in course of time, disputing, or, as we say, discussion, has itself come to be regarded as the most important occupation of man. But the best things of life are not attained by disputes nor by settling them. They are attained in amicable fellowship, by the exercise of common sense, kind feeling, and good manners—to which perhaps may be added the thing called “genius”—though this is only a rare form of common sense. They are such things as art, beauty, joy, friendship, self-respect, family affection and the love of man and woman—matters in which voting is out of the question.

Even as a mode of settling disputes the vote

does not possess the virtues commonly ascribed to it. For each dispute which it enables us to settle it causes many more. Most of the quarrels which absorb our intelligence, or drain it away from far more important matters, turn precisely on the question of what we are to do with our votes. True, we are enabled by the vote to carry on these quarrels without the shedding of blood, except, as Carlyle said, for a little from the nose at election times. But the absence of blood from our quarrels does not prove that the quarrels are good for us, nor that we are well advised in spending on them the energies that are needed for greater things.

The fighting cult and the voting cult have this in common, that they both attach exaggerated importance to the settlement of disputes, the Sword or the Vote being the rival instruments for achieving this. The cults further resemble one another in producing, by over-emphasis on their respective industries, a grave neglect of common sense, kind feeling and good manners. That this is so, few persons would deny in regard to the fighting cult; that the voting cult works in a similar manner we may presently come to see. Whichever method

adopt, we multiply quarrels, with bloodshed or without—which latter is generally, but not always, the lesser of the two evils. When this has been widely recognised we shall perhaps turn our attention to devising some form of the common life in which disputes are less likely to occur in the first instance—a proposal pointing to a régime of common sense, kind feeling and good manners, combined with a minimum of voting.

There was a time when everyone who fancied himself a man carried a sword or a cudgel. Nowadays everybody who fancies himself a man (or a woman) claims a vote. The swords and the cudgels have been given up. Will the votes follow suit ?

For the present there seems no prospect of this. The tendency of our time is in the opposite direction. There are many, indeed, who resist further extensions of the franchise, but I have never yet heard of anybody who would voluntarily relinquish his own. On the whole, so far as one can see, the extension of the franchise is bound to go on to its limit. And this is a thing to be desired, especially by those who are heretics in respect of the voting



cult. The comparative insignificance of the vote as an instrument of human progress will never be fully realised until everybody who wants it gets it. For this reason the heretic welcomes the accession of women to the electorate, though he feels they are worthy of something better, and is disposed to apologise for the meanness of the gift. Nothing has tended more to maintain the inflated reputation of the vote than the refusal of it to women. Many have thought that women, on being enfranchised, would be the first to realise how inflated a reputation it has. They have always been the superiors of men in the three qualities which are the main sources of human progress—common sense, kind feeling, good manners—and on discovering, as they soon would do, the deadly blight which “politics” cast on these things, they might raise an outcry that would bring us all to our senses. This expectation has not yet been fulfilled, but perhaps it will be hereafter.

At all events, it is instructive to ask ourselves whether votes are really worth the fuss we make about them. We might reflect on all the great achievements of mankind

which have *not* been accomplished by means of the vote—for example, the Bible, the Parthenon, the Greek Drama, Roman Law, the Catholic Church, the Divine Comedy, the Discovery of America, Shakespeare's Sonnets, the Invention of the Printing Press and Steam-engine, the French Revolution and the Population of the Globe; and then side by side with these we might make out a list of the mighty works of the vote; finally asking ourselves which of the two achievements is better worth the trouble bestowed upon it. How little of what gives lasting value to life is due to the voting industry, and how much to common sense, kind feeling, good manners and their like; and again, how much that has the contrary effect of making life a burden has been voted into existence by people who were deficient in those admirable qualities! From this it would be a short step to the conclusion that the over-emphasis we have placed on the vote is responsible in no small measure for the present deplorable decadence of the arts and for the singular dearth of great men in the modern world.

The arts wither because the life, the energy,

the faith they require are all drained off into politics, debating societies and legislation. Yet politics, debating societies and legislation, even at their best, will never confer upon mankind one tithe of the happiness that comes from the creation of beauty. This is one of the most certain of truths. The voting cult forbids men to believe it, and if they do believe it treats them as faddists. What chance have the arts in such an atmosphere? As to the great men, how can they survive when every little man holds a public licence to put them down? What spectacle more tragic than that of a man with a great soul being voted upon by a crowd of men with little souls! It is at such moments that we hesitate in deciding whether fighting or voting has done more harm to mankind. The fighters kill the body; but the voters kill the soul.

“An education which shall train the citizen in the right use of his vote.” Yes: but let it train him also in the right use of his fingers, his senses, his whole body, his wits and his immortal soul. Why should “the use of his vote” be given priority to these things?

## “OLD EDDY”

THE old political economy, it will be remembered, was largely occupied with the melancholy doings of a person called “the economic man,” who bought in the cheapest market, sold in the dearest, and apparently did nothing else. It is now generally admitted that this person does not exist.

Contemporary politics have achieved an even finer abstraction in the idea of the “voting man,” who listens to the speeches of the gentleman he is asked to vote for, records his vote, and so fulfils the object of his existence. This is the conception of humanity adopted in all the schools of electioneering. “A man” and “a voter” mean the same thing. So, too, with “a woman.” Just as in the old political economy there was no difference between an “economic man” and an “economic woman,” so in the philosophy of electioneering there is no

difference between a voting man and a voting woman. Each counts for one. If you add a voting man to a voting woman you get *two*—precisely the same result as if both were men or both women. You listen to the speeches and you vote—and that, so far as the electioneer is concerned, is the essence of your humanity, whether you be man or whether you be woman.

The public seems content to take pretty much the same view of itself. I have heard it said in so many words that “no one can be a man in the full sense of the term until he exercises the vote.” And of course the same has been said *mutatis mutandis* about women. In all of which one hears a faint echo of the fundamental article in the electioneering creed—that the voting man is the *real* man, all other forms of his humanity being mere shadows of his true self, or earlier stages of its evolution. You may be a father or a mother, a saint, a philosopher, an artist, a poet, but your humanity is not complete until it *votes*. In that dramatic moment you get to real business and pay down your contribution to the life of the age, not in airy nothings, such as beauty, or

joy, or love, but in current coin, in hard cash. There is indeed only one condition higher than that of the man who votes. It is the condition of the man who is *voted for*. And even he is voted for only that he may vote again on your behalf. Were a prophet to appear among us and declare that in the Kingdom of Heaven men neither vote nor are voted for, nobody would vote for *him*.

And yet this voting man, between whom and the voting woman there is, as I have said, no difference at all, does not exist. Like his economic counterpart he is an abstraction, or, if you will, a fiction of the electioneering imagination. This is proved by the daily practice of the electioneers, who *add him up* into majorities and minorities of so many thousands. Were the voting man a real human being you couldn't *add him* into a total of one kind or another; and the fact that he is so added proves beyond all gain-saying that he neither breathes, nor feels, nor thinks. Of all ghosts he is the thinnest.

It is a hard saying in this statistical age, but as true as it is hard, that under no circumstances whatever can human beings, real men

or real women, be *added up*. You can add things up only when they are exact duplicates of one another. A foot could not be added to a yard unless we knew that a yard was three feet. "One yard one foot" means four feet, all exactly like one another. But no man is exactly like any other man. Four men are not four times one man; and the moment you treat them as though they were you may be quite certain that they are not real men you are thinking about. If ten men see pink, that is not the same as one man seeing red. If twenty thousand men are suffering at the same time from toothache, the result of that is not a single toothache twenty thousand strong. If a million men think the Kaiser ought to be hanged, the result of that is not an opinion in favour of the hanging a million times as wise and weighty as if only one man had thought so. If the whole million vote for the hanging, what the Kaiser has against him is not a million opinions but a million votes; and if the million voters happen to be foolish, the "opinions" of the whole lot carry no more weight than the single foolish opinion of any one of them.

Men and women alike, each of us wishes to *count* for somebody, and this desire to count and be counted seems to be fulfilled when we “receive the vote” and are permitted to take our places in the vast addition sum of the nation’s voting power. It is an illusion. In the addition sum you do not count for *somebody*. You count and are counted as a *unit in a mass*. You and I are never further off from being “somebody” than when our votes are counted at the end of the poll. All differences of personality—and it is these that make a “somebody”—are wiped out as by a magician’s wand; nobody is anybody; everybody is just *one*, and each “one” is the exact duplicate of every other. In the Voters’ Paradise, where there are as many votes as there are human beings, and every question is voted on the instant it is raised, personality counts for nothing at all.

This explains the uncomfortable suspicion many of us have in these days, that as Government becomes more “representative” it represents us less and less. The truth is, that by reducing us all to the dead level of voting units it deprives us of everything in our nature



which is most worthy to be represented. Hence an incessant quarrel between the public and the politicians. "You are treating us," cries the angry public, through the leader in the *Times*, "as though we were *nobody*. We asked you for bread, and you have given us a stone." "On the contrary," the politicians reply, "we are trusting the people—trusting them to agree with us when we have explained ourselves." "Explain yourselves forthwith," say the people. "Well, then," comes the answer, "what you mean by 'bread' is what we mean by 'stone,' and *vice versa*. You have got what you asked, and we trust you to see it." Which means in plain language that what these gentlemen really trust is not the people but the formulæ under which electioneering science predicts the probable behaviour of the massed nobodies called voters. And the odd thing is, that in all this the electioneer honestly believes himself to be trusting human nature. He is ignoring it altogether. This is one of the penalties we have to pay for the conception which reduces man to the dimensions of a *being who votes and is counted*—the conception which lies at the base of electioneering. One begins to

understand why King David got into trouble for counting the people.

The disappointment of the people on discovering that their votes, which they hoped would make them “somebodies,” reduce them to units in a mass, to be dealt with by electioneering operations, is perhaps better understood if we consider the second of the abstractions I have named—the man *voted for*. Theoretically the man voted for is the sum total of the voting men who form his constituency. As the voting men have reduced themselves to nobodies by becoming units in a mass, so the man voted for is, in theory, only a bigger or totalised nobody of the same type—a purely impersonal force. In reality he is nothing of the kind. The moment comes when the voters discover to their dismay that the very process which has made them nobodies has made him somebody. They elected him to play the part of an answer to an addition sum, and to add and subtract himself from other answers similarly arrived at ; but, lo and behold ! he turns out to be an ingenious human being and as incalculable as he is ingenious. Ten thousand voting men have seen pink ; and the ten thousand pinks when

added together into the man they have voted for will make, assuredly, one blazing red. What, therefore, is the amazement of the voting men when, on opening their papers one morning, they learn that the man voted for has seen neither pink nor red but green ! For example, the Turks who were to be expelled from Constantinople are kept there by the very men who were elected to expel them. How has that come about ? It has come about because the man voted for is an ingenious "somebody" ; while the men who voted for him are units in a mass.

Years ago, in the time of the School Boards, I knew a farmer, an ignorant and violent man, who was never tired of declaiming on the theme that "education was ruining the country." His fondness for this line of argument gained him the local nickname of "Old Eddy," or, more ceremoniously, "Old Eddication." In taverns, at market, by the roadside, by his own hearth, or wherever he could find a listener, the odds were great that "Eddy" would come to the point within five minutes of the opening of conversation ; and some of the sporting gentlemen in our parish used to make bets about it.

There were other farmers in the neighbourhood who shared Eddy's views. Moreover, his constant talk about education had given him a reputation among the ignorant as an expert on the subject. He had therefore a “ party ” behind him, and it was no surprise when in due course he got himself elected on the local School Board. Meeting him one day, I ventured to ask what “ policy ” he intended to pursue in his new capacity. “ I am going to do my best,” he said, “ to put a stopper on this 'ere eddication.” “ But did you tell the electors that ? ” I asked. “ Not me ! ” he answered. “ I kept that to myself while the elections were on and put up another tune. But now I'm *in* and they can't get me *out*.”

There are few public bodies in the world, from national parliaments to parish councils, on which Old Eddy and his like are not more or less active. In local government the thing is notorious. Hardly one of our local bodies but contains a sprinkling, and perhaps more than a sprinkling, of these secret diplomatists, who have put up one “ tune ” or another to the electors, but whose real design is to “ put a stopper ” on some plan, housing or the like,

which the local body was created to carry out. In many of the cities of America the Old Eddies are practically masters of the situation. But in this country also it is often painfully manifest that all we can get in the way of reform is subject to their approval. One may even conjecture that the war was made by Old Eddies of one nationality or another. At all events, only a blind man can fail to see that they had a finger in the making of peace. Of the League of Nations it is as yet too soon to speak, but there are ominous indications that Old Eddy is looking out for his chance.

Democracy with all its inventions has not yet found a means of protecting itself against him and his ways. On the contrary, it has provided him with immense opportunities, and even tempted him with the prospect of lucrative employment. He is another lion in the path. Whosoever would make the world safe for democracy must first find a means of sending Old Eddy to the rightabout.

## THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE

IN what does the " power of the people " consist, and how can we ascertain whether it is on the increase or on the wane ?

We might begin with statistics of population and wealth. But these by themselves prove nothing. A community may increase in population and yet become degenerate ; it may increase in wealth and become corrupt. As everybody knows, the Roman Empire was losing power at the very time when it was increasing in population and in wealth. It will be agreed that we must look for other signs.

Shall we fall back, then, upon success in war and take that as our test ? But this again proves nothing, or nothing to the purpose. To begin with, the " power " to which conquest bears witness is power of a special kind which may co-exist with marked weakness in other directions, and is hardly what we have in

mind when *the power of the people* is in question. But waiving that, success in war does not prove that even the special kind of power which war requires is on the increase. It might be that this power was declining in all the nations together, but declining less rapidly in the nation which conquers than in the others. To beat your enemies in war it is not necessary that you should increase in warlike power; it is enough if you decrease less rapidly than they.

Let us try for another test. What shall we say to the extension of the franchise? That people, we might argue, is growing in power which is giving to its members a larger share in the business of government; the greater the number of persons who possess a vote the greater will be the power of the people. This at first sight looks more promising; but, unfortunately, the promise is damped by further consideration. What looks promising is that the people, all of whom we will assume now possess the vote, have the power to get what they want. What damps the promise is that the people seldom know what they want. Shall we keep Mesopotamia<sup>1</sup> or shall we give

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1917.

it up ? Some of us are for the one, some for the other. Shall we establish Home Rule or try something else ? Some of us are for the one, some for the other. Consequently the people break into parties or factions, and instead of concentrating their power on a prompt settlement of Ireland or Mesopotamia, waste it in a war of minds which goes on for a half-century and generates so much bad temper that the questions at issue become almost insoluble. Is that a sign of power ?

But we are not yet at the end of our tether. Instead of thinking of the questions on which the people seem unable to make up their minds, let us turn to those which by one means or another do get themselves settled. Let us judge by accomplished results, by the legislation actually turned out, by the elaboration and the efficiency of the government machinery, of one kind or another, which an enfranchised people sets up for the purpose of defending its house and keeping the inmates in order.

There are the army and navy, equipped with all that science and skill can devise. There are the Constitution, the laws, the rules of Parliamentary Procedure, the Courts of Justice, the



jails, the police. Behold this vast organisation, and as it develops and extends and imposes its rules on ever-widening circles of the normal life, may we not say that the people, whose will it represents, is growing in power ?

At last, then, we seem to have discovered a sound test by applying which we can ascertain whether the power of the people is increasing or the reverse. The test is organisation, as revealed by the laws enacted and enforced.

But even this test is not infallible. Unless the greatest care is used in its application it may lead to mischievous conclusions, and has in fact done so already. It may give us an inflated notion of the power of the people, and it may blind us to their weakness.

We must ask not merely *how much* organisation there is, but what is its purpose, *what is it for* ? Suppose that the greater part consists of laws and rules for compelling people to do what they ought to do for themselves without compulsion—for example, keeping their promises, or providing for their old age, or educating their children, or behaving themselves decently in the streets. Should we not now begin to draw conclusions contrary to those to which our first

impressions led us ? Should we not say that all this governmental machinery which seems at first sight to speak of nothing but power is rather the sign of weakness further back ? Evidently, we should argue, these people are weak in the principle of honour, weak in the sense of parental duty, weak in self-respect and intelligence, or they would not require so many laws and so many policemen to compel them to keep their promises, to educate their children, to provide for their old age, and to behave decently in the streets. Suppose some genial philosopher should take us to a chemist's shop and say, "Here are the signs of the health of the people. See how powerfully science is grappling with the ills of the body. An appropriate remedy for every disease ! Not one of them without its corresponding bottle of physic ! Lethal weapons for the microbe ! Death for colic, gout, measles ! You are in the very temple of health."

What should we answer to our genial philosopher ? "Your argument," we should say, "is a bad one."

Let us try a bolder image still. Suppose we could be introduced in turn to two planets.

The first we will imagine to be roaring with "government" of the type or types that now exist on this earth; parliaments in full swing everywhere; laws pouring out from the Senate-house like sausages from a Chicago pork-factory; an incorruptible policeman at every street corner; and a good substantial jail to reassure the nervous traveller at the entrance of every town. Our second planet shall have none of these things. Its inhabitants shall manage their affairs by means of an understanding, such as exists in every well-regulated family, that they are to trust one another for decent behaviour. On which of these two planets should we see the plainest signs of the *power* of the people?

But all this, it may be said, is not quite fair. Granted that the laws and the courts of justice and the jails and the policemen, and all the other means the people take to keep themselves in order, do suggest what you say—namely, that the principle of order must be weak to begin with. But they suggest something else as well, which is, that the people *know* their weakness and are taking the appropriate means to make themselves strong. It is because they

recognise the importance of their duties and are resolved to acquire the habit of doing them, that they set up a government and continually increase its scope. The government is a sign of power after all.

Very good. But now, if this line of reasoning is sound, what are we entitled to expect? We are entitled to expect that as time goes on there will be a gradual diminution of the function of government. As the people acquire the habits of order and goodwill which the laws and the police are intended to teach them, the output of law and the number of policemen will steadily decrease. But they don't decrease. They increase continually. Day by day there are more orders to obey and more compulsion to submit to. The habit of spontaneous good behaviour is not being acquired. The habit that *is* being acquired is of a very different kind. It is the habit of relying upon government to effect everything which we might effect for ourselves. The growth of that habit measures the growing weakness of the people.

The true test of growth in the power of the people lies not in the amount of government it creates, but in the amount of government

it can dispense with ; not in the number of laws it enacts, but in the number it can do without.

The cry is ever for more government and more laws ; and when one pleads for less government and fewer laws, and argues that a sovereign people should show its sovereignty by abstaining from the misconduct which renders policemen necessary, there is an inevitable shout of derision : " What ! No courts of law ! No jails ! No lawyers ! No elections ! No Secretaries of State ! " Thus the *Spectator* not long ago, in criticising certain pacifist proposals of a rather foolish nature, had this sentence : " There would certainly be greater waste of money and greater human suffering if we disbanded our police force, pulled down our jails, and placed no check on private greed and private passion. " Quite true. But the point is that whatever sign of a people's power may be read in the jails and policemen appointed to check its evil passions, there is a sign of greater weakness in the evil passions that need to be so checked.

There is a much shorter cut to the same end than that provided by the jails and policemen,

which is, of course, to get rid of the evil passions in the first instance; and that is what we should expect a really *powerful* people to do. I suppose most persons would grant so obvious a commonplace. Why, then, has no sovereign people so far taken this obvious shorter cut? Because we have a wrong notion of sovereignty; because we consistently look to our masters to do for us what we could do much better for ourselves; because we have fallen so deeply into the habit of trusting to jails and policemen to do the business, that we have forgotten how easily the whole business might be done by the exercise of qualities which anybody can acquire.

Nothing is more curious in the political thought of our day than the dominance in it of the idea of the policeman. It would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that our ultimate category of political thought is the police. And not of our political thought alone, for the God whom many of us worship. . . . But let us keep to politics. The very "pacifists" whom the *Spectator* trounces for wanting to get rid of the police have oddly enough a scheme of their own on hand for setting up an international

police as a means of preventing war. There seems no getting rid of the police obsession—no persuading people, not even pacifists, to take the pacific way of common sense instead of the provocative way of police supervision.

## ON TRUSTING GREAT MEN

It is much easier to say what a great man is not, than to say what he is. All that need be said on the positive side has been said by Carlyle, and I must refer the reader to his incomparable pages for further information.

A great man is not the common measure of lesser men. He is not the soul of a committee, nor of a people. You don't get his portrait by making a composite photograph of his inferiors; nor the value of his qualities by summarising theirs. All which is a roundabout way of saying that the great man *represents* nobody. This can be proved quite simply. For if a great man represents a multitude, then, reciprocally, the multitude ought to be able to represent *him*; and that everybody knows to be absurd.

One of the hollownest of the fictions that have arisen from our dabbings in psychology is the



notion that one man can "represent" another man, which of course is precisely what no human individual could ever do for another since the world began, each individual being unique. This fundamental truth, which is apt to be obscured when "average" men are in question, stands out quite clearly when the great man, who is obviously unique, steps upon the scene. How can a great mind represent a lot of lesser minds than itself? The thing is transparently nonsensical. As well talk of an Egyptian pyramid representing a suburb of jerry-built houses, or a rose representing a field of turnips. If the great man may be said to represent anything at all, he represents not what his inferiors are but precisely what they are not. He stands in his own rights.

Whence it follows that when a multitude of lesser men elect one greater than themselves to do their business, what they ought to expect is not that he will act as they would act, but that he will act differently, *i.e.* more wisely. If what they want is a man who would act precisely as they would act in the given circumstances, then they should be especially careful *not* to elect a greater man than them-

selves. They should choose one of their own number. But let us suppose that in the day of crisis a wise democracy, knowing its own limitations (the chief part of wisdom), knowing that great emergencies do not wait the pleasure of warring factions, chooses its pilot and gives him charge to weather the storm.

How will they treat him? The answer is given in four words. *They will trust him.* And by trusting him, and causing him to feel that he is trusted, they will strengthen his hands. Herein they will show that they are loyal to the democratic principle in its purest form. No man among them shall say, "Yon pilot is a menace to our liberty." They will say rather, "He is the guardian of our liberty, and as such we, who have freely chosen him to carry our burden, will trust him, honour him, uphold him."

Thus it will be seen that the treatment of great men is largely a question of good manners. When, some time ago, a certain writer expatiated on the importance of good manners to the stability of a great nation, some persons supposed that he meant such

things as lifting your hat when you say good-bye to your sister, or not making a gobbling noise when you take soup. He had to explain that he was thinking of the "charity that never faileth," and with particular reference to current methods of treating great men. In these there is very little of the charity that never faileth. And a consideration of the deplorable effects which follow from this ought to convince the most austere that there are some situations where good manners are indispensable to morality.

For example, many of us have an abominable habit of suspecting that every great man wants to become a dictator—one of the meanest motives you could attribute to any man, and a foul insult when attributed to a great one. It is an asinine and scoundrelly thing to harbour such a suspicion. Who but an ass would appoint a man to perform a task which only an independent spirit could tackle, and then suspect him of wanting to be a dictator because forsooth he shows independence? And who but a scoundrel would say to a man, "I will trust you to see this thing through," and then charge him with personal ambition, and tell other mean

stories to his discredit the moment he sets his hand to the plough ? And yet that is the way in which many of us are accustomed to treat our great men. It is a demoralising business for all concerned : demoralising for the great men, who are sometimes driven by despair to play down to their detractors, and so become what they are suspected of being ; demoralising for the detractors, whose vanity it feeds and whose pettiness it accentuates.

The desire to become a dictator is the characteristic vice of a little man, and we may take it as demonstrably certain that no man who is truly great is capable of harbouring any such desire. Yet the position is somewhat paradoxical. For while it is true on the one hand that no great man ever *wants* to be a dictator, it is equally true on the other that he cannot *help* dictating. That, in fact, is what he is for, what he has been appointed to do. If all we require at the head of affairs is a person who will do what he is told to do by the public, or by the Press, or by the leading ladies of London Society, any diligent fool, any well-groomed nonentity, will serve our purpose. In fact the hero's valet will do the business

better than the hero himself. Is it not a folly, nay a crime, to waste a hero by giving him such a commission? Was there ever perversity like this? Was there ever an exhibition of worse manners? It is vulgarity gone mad.

Now there are two tests of the greatness of a people. One is its capacity for producing great men, so as to have them ready when a crisis or emergency has to be met. The other is right treatment of the great men when they are produced. The two tests are virtually one. Great men will not be produced, or at least they will not come forward unless there is a fair chance that the public will treat them like gentlemen. On the other hand, if the public treats them meanly they will be spoilt, and instead of having great men for our leaders we shall have only spoiled great men—that is, the worst kind of leader conceivable. Put it either way and the result is the same. The public will get for its leaders none but the second-rate men who, just because they are second-rate, do not wince when they hear themselves suspected of wanting to be dictators, which in their case is conceivably true.

As to the production of great men—the actual

breeding of them—I am not competent to offer any suggestions, and must leave the whole question to the eugenists or other experts. On the whole, I am inclined to think that the breeding of this particular class of men is beyond the resources of positive science.

To say of any man that he is great is only another way of saying he can be trusted. Unless we trust him he is of very little use to us. His greatness, so to speak, is thrown away. To mistrust him, or simply not to trust him, is bad both for us and for him : bad for us, because it leads us to cultivate the habit of disloyalty ; bad for him, because it compels him to fritter away the time and energy needed for doing our business, in defending himself against our mistrust or our criticisms. How much of the precious time and strength of such men has to be spent in beating off the birds of prey whose occupation it is to peck and hawk at the work of the great ! One can hardly think of it without weeping. If only we could have trusted these men a little more they would have yet been greater men ; and they would have done our business better.

The difficulty of learning to trust our great

men arises, in chief, from the circumstance that opinion is always sharply divided on the claim to greatness. I may think, for example, that Mr — is a great man ; but others think the contrary, make him their target and shoot him down. The truth is, that our instinct for the detection of great men is deplorably undeveloped.

How to improve it is a large question, connected with our whole manner of life and thought. It is much easier to say how the needed improvement is prevented. It is prevented by the atmosphere, manners, method, spirit and aims of party government. In party government the prime object is not to get the business done in the best manner and the shortest time, but to dish your opponents ; and if that is accomplished, few persons care much about the great men who are sacrificed in the process. Every sharp debater who can shoot a great man down thinks himself to be doing God service and is applauded for his performance. In such an atmosphere the habit of mind which thinks about great men, meditates on their value and learns to trust them, has no chance of forming itself ; and the

instinct for detecting great men becomes atrophied. Of course the shooting-down tactics of the one party may have the effect, incidentally, of increasing the devotion of the other party to their chief. But this effect is not altogether good, for it leads the party attacked to make their great man into an idol, which is the next worse thing to using him as a target. Wrong treatment of the great man is thus promoted from both sides. If we could get out of this atmosphere altogether our instinct for detecting great men, which is after all a natural gift, would begin to assert itself, with results most beneficial to our public life.



## LEADERSHIP

**THE** power to dismiss its leaders at a moment's notice and replace them with new ones has been celebrated as a notable privilege of democracy. I have heard it said that this power is one of the safeguards of liberty. And so perhaps it is. But what kind of liberty is that which requires safeguarding by an arrangement so drastic? And what kind of men are they who will accept the position of leaders on the understanding that they are subject to instant dismissal? And what is the point in choosing a leader whose retention of office is contingent on his pleasing you? There was once a great leader who said to his followers, "You have not chosen me; I have chosen you." That strikes the true note of leadership, but what can democracy make of it?

These questions, which, of course, are very old ones, were brought back to my mind with

fresh force by a perusal of Lord Morley's *Recollections*—and especially by the chapter which deals with the Irish troubles of the early 'nineties. Lord Morley heads his chapter "The Tornado," though it seems a tornado in a teacup when compared with the recent storms, which the powers of darkness had even then begun to brew. The principal justification for calling it a tornado is that it lifted the roof off the house where the political leaders of that time had established their dwelling, and dispersed the inmates into various exiles.

As we read Lord Morley's narrative we see how these poor men lived in the apprehension of instant dismissal; how thin and rotten was much of the ice they skated on; how constantly they were engaged in warning one another of the rotten places and seeking to avoid them; how slippery and steep were the precipices they had to climb, and how again and again they hung on by their teeth, expecting every moment to be plunged into the abyss—as indeed they ultimately were, on a slight impulse administered by the Irish leader of those days. Much of their time was spent in manœuvring to save themselves from being

overthrown by their own followers, and a most exciting business it evidently was. They piped, but neither Parliament nor the public would dance. They were certainly under no illusion as to the security of their tenure. They knew they were destined to a brief career, and when the moment of dismissal arrived, they accepted it without complaint, as sportsmen should. Yet these men, who never knew whether the morrow would see them politically alive, were the very men whom the British electors had chosen to lead in dealing with the most perplexing problem of our political history—a problem requiring length of time, far-reaching plans, and tenacity of purpose maintained through many years. With a courage that cannot be too much admired they undertook their leadership, clearly understanding that whatever plans they had formed, whatever policy they had begun, might be abruptly broken off at any moment. And in all this their position was not exceptional. It was the position occupied by all leaders in a democracy whose liberty is guarded by powers of immediate dismissal.

Although this state of things is all fair,

open and avowed, it has some disadvantages. "Minister," of course, means "servant." But so far as I know, Ministers of State are the only class of servants who can be dismissed without notice. We could hardly expect to secure an efficient gardener or an efficient butler on those terms. No doubt if we paid our gardeners and butlers at the rate of £5000 a year the positions would be attractive to a certain order of adventurous spirits, and we should have many applicants. But even so things would not prosper either in the greenhouse or the wine-cellar. We should be exposed to annoying intrigues in the servants' hall, with what result to our peaches and old wine may be easily imagined—just as the public is exposed to annoying intrigues in Parliament, with what result to the public interest is well known.

In war the military oath pledges us to follow our leaders and obey their orders for a definite period—to the end of the campaign, or for a stated term of years ; in politics we reserve the right to desert our leaders whenever we choose, or—which comes to the same thing—to turn them out at any time by the same methods which put them in.

Now this is a pretty arrangement when looked at from the point of view of those whose business in politics is to follow—the mass of the citizens. It is pleasant to feel that you are under no obligation to obey orders a moment longer than you are disposed. But the leaders, surely, must view it in a different light, and the standing wonder is that any man of first-rate intelligence should be willing to engage himself to the public on those conditions. For who knows better than he that in great affairs nothing can be done in a hurry ; that the objects best worth striving for are distant, and that he can accomplish little unless he is sure of long-dated loyalty in his followers to match the length of the journey that lies before him.

Truly it must be a heart-breaking business, and £5000 a year seems a small solatium to offer any man for enduring it. To make far-reaching plans for the public good, and then find them suddenly upset or endlessly deferred because a section of your followers has exercised the sacred right to desert you when they will—this makes one ask what stuff the men are made of who consent to take office on these

terms. No doubt they have their consolations, and even enjoy the wild adventure while it lasts ; but that only serves to divert one's sympathy from them to the public. For it is the public which pays for this, as for everything else.

An American writer, Dr Cram, has published a book called *The Nemesis of Mediocrity*, in which he discusses this question of leadership. He makes a canvass of the various men who have lately come to the front, especially in politics, and dismisses them, one after another, as mediocre, with President Wilson as a possible exception. The mediocrity of our leaders reflects, he thinks, the general mediocrity of our own lives, so that in a sense it is ourselves who are to blame. The moral is that we must get rid of our own mediocrity before we can expect anything else in our leaders.

Now there are two ways in which we may get rid of our mediocrity, one pointing downwards, the other pointing upwards. It is clearly the latter that Dr Cram recommends. But would it have the effect he anticipates ? Would the efficiency of our leaders rise automatically with the parallel rise in the qualities of the public ? Well, it depends on the qualities. A

following composed of superior persons would be a very difficult lot for any leader to handle. Suppose, for example, that the average citizen were to acquire the political intelligence and the high moral standards of Dr Cram himself, and were to apply this intelligence and these high standards in criticising his chief. Is it not obvious that under these circumstances the position of the leader would become intolerable?

Little to be envied is the great man entrusted with the task of leading a public in which there are thousands of connoisseurs in leadership prowling about and seeking whom they may devour. He would soon come to grief. The sharpness of their criticism would undo him; he would be torn to pieces. We may compare the situation with the report of a gentleman recently returned from Russia. He said that when the revolution took place all the privates in the Russian army suddenly became generals. After a little experience it occurred to this army of generals that it would be wise to appoint a generalissimo, and a deputation was sent to a promising strategist to offer him the post. For answer the promising strategist

drew his hand across his throat and shook his head ; which gestures the deputation rightly understood as meaning that the post was declined. This incident seems a fair illustration of what is likely to happen when a public which has got rid of its mediocrity, as the Russian privates had done, sets about the task of finding a leader. The matter is deeply paradoxical. Is it not because of our mediocrity that we need somebody who is *not* mediocre to lead us ? What then will happen when we have all ceased to be mediocre ?

The truth is, that the game of leadership requires *two* to play it : a leader to give orders and a public to obey them. The problem is not merely that of finding a man who is able to lead ; it is equally that of finding a public which is willing to follow. People who deplore the lack of great leadership in modern times usually fix their attention on the first half of the problem and ignore the second altogether. We clamour for leaders, and grow less and less willing to follow anybody. Perhaps we are under some illusion. Most of us feel that if only we could find a leader after our own heart we would gladly follow him. After our own



heart ! Precisely ; but may it not be that what we all need—as distinct from what we *want*—is a leader *not* after our own heart ? Should we follow *him* ?

The difficulty of finding leaders is therefore far greater than the mere form of words suggests, for it includes the difficulty of finding followers—the major part of the problem. What is to be done ? Various alternatives present themselves, of which the following are perhaps the chief :

1. Would not the public be well advised to make up its mind to do without leaders altogether, contenting itself with servants only, and giving all Ministers of State to understand clearly that that is what they are and that nothing else is expected of them ? Is not the public playing fast and loose with a vital problem when in one and the same breath it declares itself master and bemoans its lack of leaders ? Is not this double-minded ?

2. May we not have a kind of secret leadership exercised by powerful personalities, whose identity is unknown to the public, but who, by indirection and various byways, manage to make their ideas effective and so lead the people

without letting them know who is leading them or even that they are being led at all? These men by playing their part judiciously might wield enormous influence, though, of course, they would receive no salaries, and enjoy no fame until they were dead. Much influence of this kind is being actually exercised at the present moment, though perhaps it is a little indiscreet to say so. We make a mistake in thinking only of the great men who are in evidence. We should think also of those who are in hiding. There are many of them. Some are in hiding for reasons suggested by the incident of the Russian generalissimo. Should not these men be encouraged? And would not a wise public abstain from all efforts to lift the veil of anonymity which now protects their leadership from destruction?

3. The last alternative is suggested by the position of the President of the United States. He is appointed leader for four years with the possibility of renewing the term. It is an admirable arrangement, for it gives the President an incentive which Ministers of State who are subject to dismissal without notice do not possess. The men who framed the American

Constitution had a profound political insight. They understood that leadership is a game which *two* must play if it is to be played at all ; and accordingly they made arrangements to follow their leader *for four years*.

## SECRET DIPLOMACY

OF all the words in current use there are none which stand in greater need of definition than the two words "policy" and "diplomacy." To ascertain what he means by these words, which he has constantly on his lips, may be commended as a useful exercise to anyone who takes an interest in public affairs. He will find himself in deep waters before he has gone very far, and that is precisely what will do him good.

If we open any newspaper, whether conservative or revolutionary, we shall find the word "policy" dotted all over the page, like church steeples in a bird's-eye view of London; while here and there the word "diplomacy" will stand out like the spire or dome of a cathedral. The two words are obviously related. Whatever "policy" may be, "diplomacy" is a more concentrated, highly finished, and august form

of the same thing. The crux of the matter is obviously to find out the meaning of "policy."

For this purpose we may turn either to the cynics or to the dictionaries. The cynics, like the dictionaries, differ considerably among themselves, but they all agree in defining policy as some kind of art. "The art of deluding the public," "the art of dishing your adversaries," "the art of dishonouring your promises while appearing to keep them," "the art of shearing the innocent sheep nearer and nearer to the skin," "the art of turning the stupidity of mankind to your own advantage," and so on—abominable definitions all of them, and yet none without a grain of truth.

Turning now to the dictionaries, it is obvious that their makers find "policy" an exceptionally hard nut to crack. My own dictionary, after travailing through four elaborate but inconsistent definitions, finally capitulates to the cynics in the fifth, which is "dexterity of management." Then, as though exhausted by its efforts, or perhaps as giving it up altogether, or ashamed of its capitulation to the cynics, it adds the significant note, "see *Police*"—the usual device of an Englishman at the end of his

wits. After which it is a great relief to find that *in Scotland* the word means “the pleasure grounds around a nobleman’s or gentleman’s country residence”—which makes one wish that the Scottish usage were universal.

Baffled in our attempts to comprehend the *idée-mère*, let us turn to its more highly developed offspring—“diplomacy.” Here, from the outset, we find ourselves in the world of the esoteric, the private, the secret, and the indications, it must be confessed, are distinctly sinister. We are informed by our authority that diplomacy is derived from a Greek word meaning “to double,” and that in the form of “diploma” it refers to the *doubled* or sealed piece of parchment on which a secret authority to practise was given to an agent. That looks innocent enough. But the sinister fact is that this sense of something *sealed* or *doubled* pursues the word through all its subsequent meanings until finally it comes to indicate a sealed or doubled human mind. “The tactics employed in the art of conducting negotiations”—so runs the penultimate definition. In the next paragraph the dictionary comes to the point and makes a clean breast of it—“artful

management with a view to securing advantages." Such is the sense given by an advanced civilisation to a word which began its history in the ages of the world's innocence by meaning a doubled piece of paper.

And again I receive the impression that my dictionary is ashamed of its own performance and tired of the whole nasty business. For, on turning up the word "diplomat," in the hope that light would come from the more concrete term, I am met by the curt announcement, "see Diplomatist." I "see diplomatist" accordingly, but, alas! the only definition offered me is "a diplomat." "Is my dictionary joking?" I ask myself. No, it is acting diplomatically, or, which perhaps comes to the same thing, making a fool of me. It is answering my question on the precise principle which governs the answers to half the questions that are asked in the House of Commons.

These etymological studies may be commended to all those who are engaged in a crusade for "open diplomacy"; in other words, for the making single of that whose nature is to be double. Even etymology should warn them that they have their work cut out. But the

difficulties of the problem are by no means confined to etymology, as I will now endeavour to show.

The standing difficulty about abolishing anything that is thoroughly secret is that you never know when it is going on. If you know that it is going on, it is no secret; if it is a secret, you neither know *what* is going on, *where* it is going on, *when* it is going on, *who* is making it go on, nor *even that* it is going on at all. How, then, can you abolish it?

Clearly the situation is one in which we are able to deal with the mischief only after it has taken place. We cannot arrest it in process, because we are unaware of its proceedings. The best we can do is to wait till it happens and then take measures to prevent it happening again. This means that when the secret operator has been found out we can punish him for his secrecy, as a warning to him and to others not to repeat the offence.

But this, after all, is not a very brilliant way out of our difficulty. For a secret which is found out is not, strictly speaking, a secret at all. We may define it as something which began by being a secret but couldn't keep it



up. Or, to use more concrete terms, we may say that an operator who lets himself be found out is not an adept in secrecy. Hence the punishment we inflict when we find him out will have a different effect upon him from that we desire. It will warn him to be more secret next time. He will be careful not to repeat the imperfect secrecy which led to his being found out and got him into trouble. "I have got into this trouble," he will say, "not because I was secret, but because I wasn't secret enough. I will do better next time." This is the inevitable consequence of all anathemas or punishments directed against secrecy as such. We think we are imposing deterrents. What we are really doing is to offer the bungler in secrecy a powerful incentive to make himself a finished artist.

A cynic has remarked that the British public traces its descent on the political side from the Wise Men of Gotham. In support of this a story is told that once upon a time the Gothamites determined to repress by law all malpractices committed *after dark*. These excellent people had noted the connection between darkness and wrong-doing, and hoped, like their

modern descendants, that by striking at secrecy they would defeat the wrong-doer in advance. So they passed a law which enacted that for the future all robberies must be committed in public. The story goes on that not long after the Act was passed one of the law-abiding criminals of Gotham announced by the public crier that he was going to commit a robbery at such a time and place, and invited the mayor, town clerk, parish constable, and all others who might be interested, to witness the proceedings. In due course these functionaries, attended by a crowd of their fellow-citizens, appeared upon the scene. The thief also turned up to time, and, pointing to a jeweller's shop-window, called out in a loud voice that he was going to begin. Whereupon the mayor put on his gold chain, the town clerk adjusted his spectacles to take cognisance of the crime, and the constable made ready to arrest the criminal. A moment later there was great consternation. The gold chain had vanished from the neck of the mayor, the town clerk's spectacles were no longer on his nose, and the constable was crying out that somebody had stolen his handcuffs ; while the thief was nowhere to be seen.

Turning to the parallel case of open diplomacy, it is well to grasp from the outset that diplomacy is essentially the art of keeping secrets. The diplomat against whom the public needs protection is not the diplomat who cannot keep a secret, but the diplomat who can. This gentleman is not easy to bring to book. He will cheerfully accept the law which requires him to divulge all his secrets, for he will see in a flash that he can evade the law when he pleases, and even make it serve his own ends, *by the simple device of keeping it secret that he has any secrets to divulge.* He will be open as the day and, at the same time, secret as the night; which, oddly enough, are only two ways of describing the same fact. It is a truth well known to thieves, spies and conjurers, who are diplomatists of a kind, that no man can be secret as the night until he has persuaded his neighbours that he is open as the day. He has only to keep it secret that he has any secrets to divulge, and who can now convict him of a want of openness? To men who have been keeping secrets all their lives, trained in the school of secrecy and with the traditions of it in the marrow of their bones, the keeping of

this additional secret presents no difficulties at all. The diplomat who understands all the rest of his business, but doesn't understand this part of it, may be dismissed from consideration. Clearly the public needs no protection against *him*. But to the adept diplomatist our prohibition of secrecy will merely act as a reminder of the conditions essential to the success of his art. It will act upon him in the same way as the request to a conjurer to declare what he has got up his sleeve. He will promptly roll up his sleeve and show you that there is nothing there. He has foreseen that openness would be required at that point, and has taken the precaution of lodging his secrets elsewhere.

To those—and it is to be feared they are the majority—who treat politics as a problem in machinery, who ignore psychology, and forget that the ingenuities of the human mind are always the determining factor in human affairs, these considerations will appear insignificant. Reasoning in their usual manner, they will argue that all we need for the reform of diplomacy is to turn it from a machine that is locked up into a machine that is open to public inspection—just as you might open the door at the back of the

town clock and invite the citizens to watch the wheels going round, and put the mainspring under "democratic control." But when we realise that what we have here to do with is primarily the diplomatic *mind*, which is more artful than the town clock, and that diplomacy is simply the diplomatic mind in action, we shall come to very different conclusions. We shall not alter our opinion that candour and openness are essential to the right conduct of international affairs, but we shall see that they are not to be had from the diplomatic mind, and that diplomats are the last people in the world from whom to expect them. The diplomatic mind is not made, nor trained, for openness. It is made and trained for secrecy; it is, and must always be, a depository and guardian of secrets. On any other terms it would cease to be diplomatic. Open diplomacy is a self-contradiction, and therefore an impossibility.

If any diplomatist should chance to read what is here written, I trust he will not find himself held up to condemnation. He is entitled to our sympathy and respect. As a secret agent he is doing the work which his employer, the public, commissions him to do

and pays him for doing. Were he open he would be false to his trust. He has no more right to be open than a detective has when he is following up a difficult trail. The public, in requiring him to be open, is simply asking him to cultivate a new form of secrecy. Heaven knows that the diplomatist has secrets enough to guard already. Why, then, load him with one more—and a nasty one too—the secret, namely, that he is secretly outwitting the public by professing to be open? Sorely tempted under the best of circumstances, why tempt him further and tempt him in this abominable way? Who can blame him if he acts like the thief in my story and gives the public which is asking for deception precisely what the public is asking for?

It would not be true that in the work of internationalism—I use the word in the sense applicable to any believer in the League of Nations—the diplomat has no place at all. Even internationalism, grounded as it is on openness, will not be able to dispense entirely with him or with his secrets. But the place it has for him is secondary and subordinate. It is not that of leader, prime agent, or guiding

spirit. As one of its many servants, internationalism can give him a modest employment; but as master of the situation he will inevitably bring the whole enterprise to ruin, and no less inevitably if he is required to be open than if he is allowed to be secret. He is the product of combative nationalism, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh, a person indispensable to the aims which combative nationalism has in view. He, with his secrets, belongs to the world of the balance of power. So long as the problem is that of "balancing" the claims of war-making empires, of adjusting their mutual pressures, he, and he alone, can pull the strings. But when the ideal of balance has been discarded and the ideal of co-operation substituted, he is no longer the man for the leading place. His presence there will immediately arouse suspicions and prompt the counter-moves of all the other diplomats whose wits are pitted against his, and internationalism will straightway revert to the traditional form of "foreign politics." Let the League of Nations, then, beware of the diplomat and his "artful management in securing advantages."

## COMPULSORY EDUCATION

STRICTLY speaking, there is not, never has been, and never will be, such a thing as compulsory education. You can compel parents to send their children to school, you can compel the children (within limits) to learn their lessons, but so long as words have a meaning you will never compel anybody to be "educated." All education is a joint operation of teacher and learner, and unless the learner willingly contributes his share, nothing that the teacher can do for him, or compel him to do for himself, will make him an educated human being.

No matter with what powers and terrors the teacher may be armed, the learner, if he is so minded, can always thwart him. He can thwart him by forgetting what he has been taught. He can thwart him by refusing to believe it. He can thwart him by despising it.



He can thwart him by applying it to the purpose opposite to that for which it was intended. Of course, when a youth has acquired a certain mental training by being compelled to learn something he despises, disbelieves, or is determined to forget—though he will never acquire much mental training on those terms—some echo of this discipline will always linger in his mind. But he may still turn it to uses which thwart the essential objects for which it was given him. He may use it for playing the part of an astute rascal or a clever fool. Put it as you will, the learner has the major control of the situation. He can only be educated by his own connivance. Education is by consent, not by compulsion.

The word "education" inevitably suggests to our minds the picture of a school. We see the pedagogue sitting at his desk and ruling the situation with a rod of iron. We see the children on the forms, submitting to a system imposed upon them by wise elders, doing as they are bid, learning what they are given, and being caned or "kept in" if they kick or refuse. "Compulsion" is naturally associated with such a scene, and schoolmasters, who are not

the least tyrannical of mankind, are only too apt to accept the word as appropriate and pleasing. The use of the term "master" or "mistress" to define the school-teacher's office betrays this bias towards tyranny in a very significant manner. We have only to read the utterances on education which come from sciolists to see how deeply rooted, and how difficult to uproot, is the notion that education consists in playing the part of "master"—that is, in imposing a system upon those who, in the last resort, must be coerced into receiving it. The learner—in jacket and knickerbockers—does not know what is good for him to learn. But the teacher—in cap and gown—knows; and the relation between the two is conceived accordingly. The teacher is "master" and the learner is—what shall we say?—not exactly slave or servant, but one whose essential part in the joint operation is even more submissive—to learn what he is set and to believe what he is told. Compulsory education, of course!

This is how the matter comes to be conceived when we treat education, as we almost invariably do, in the form of a schoolmaster's problem. Fundamentally, it is nothing of the

kind. It is a social problem, and the biggest of them all. It is a question of the type of culture best suited to the requirements of the age. We have to consider not alone what it is abstractly desirable that people should be taught, but still more what they are capable of assimilating and what they are willing to learn. Viewed in this large way, it is immediately apparent that compulsion is out of the question. You can never impose upon the public, upon the age, upon the "uneducated classes," a type of culture they dislike, distrust, and are unwilling to receive.

Our stock image of a party in jacket and knickerbockers on the one side, and a party in cap and gown on the other, is not applicable to the world at large, or applicable only by putting the jacket and knickerbockers on those who fancy themselves entitled to the cap and gown. The uneducated classes are by no means willing to be educated on the understanding that they do not know what is good for them and that "we" do. They will never accept from "us" a type of culture which they do not value and have no opportunity of applying. To quote the words of a Yorkshire

operative to the present writer, on learning that he came from Oxford : " Make no mistake about one thing : we working men mean to have education ; *but we are not going to take it from you.*"

The first point we have to grasp is that if we are to have any success with education we must abandon the attempt at compulsion, and must dismiss the word, bag and baggage, from the vocabulary of the subject. By compulsion, I mean the policy or the action of an intellectual élite, a learned aristocracy, who think themselves possessed of the right or the power to impose their type of culture on the world at large, on the community in general. I mean the notion that the community is divided into two classes—an educated class in cap and gown, and an uneducated class in jacket and knickerbockers—and that the former are the " masters " of a school, in which the latter are the pupils, ready to learn what they are taught and to believe as they are bidden. Not until these notions have been utterly discarded and—I must add—not until the airs of superiority which usually go with them have been finally abandoned, shall we be in a position

to take the first step towards real and vital education.

If the educated classes would give themselves the trouble to get into a little closer touch with the uneducated, their eyes would be quickly opened to the truth of this matter. They would discover that the so-called "indifference of the masses" to education has been wholly misconceived and misnamed. The masses are not indifferent to education; *but they are profoundly distrustful of the particular sort of education that is being offered them*, and for good reasons of their own. Moreover, they bitterly resent being treated as the jacket-and-knickerbocker party. They even deny that they are uneducated—or, rather, and the correction is important, they deny that "we" are educated. They regard us as a very inefficient lot. They think that they understand their business better than we understand ours, and since the test of education is the understanding of one's own business, they are convinced that we are less educated than themselves. They see no good to be gained by swallowing "our" culture. At the present time, especially, they point to the appalling mess the "educated classes" have

made of things ; they see how fatal the mess would have been if the " uneducated classes " had not come to the rescue ; and they are more than ever disposed to look upon the culture we offer them with distrust. Indeed, they have all they can do to restrain themselves from bidding us " get out."

On the whole, I believe they have sounder notions of education than we have. " Education," they say, " must take the form of teaching us to make the best of the life we have to live. But the education you are offering us has little or nothing to do with that life. It is at best an ornament. It has done *you* little good—witness the mess you have made of things. It would do *us* no good at all. It is not suited to the life we have to live. It would hinder us far more than it would help. It is a foreign product, an exotic thing, a bit of a flower garden set down in the middle of a corn-field." Such are their thoughts ; but let no one suppose they indicate " a gross materialism." There is far more idealism at the back of them than appears at first sight. To be a moral idealist it is not necessary that you should go up and down the world, perhaps in company

with the devil, spouting eloquence about the moral ideal. These people are convinced that their life, hard as it is, could be transformed into a fine and noble life if only they were educated for that object. Their complaint is that "we" are trying to educate them for another sort of life which they know they cannot attain, and are not, in fact, desirous of living. And there is no compulsion which can make them think otherwise.

If anybody doubts these things let him consider the Germans.<sup>1</sup> The Germans are the typical exponents of compulsory education. In their own eyes they are the educated class of the universe, and their policy accordingly is to impose their culture on the rest of mankind. Germany, observe, is to be not merely the master but the *schoolmaster* of all nations. She alone knows what is good for them. She alone is to wear the cap and gown and to wield the rod. The others are in jacket and knickerbockers. "One single highly cultivated German warrior," said Haeckel, "represents a higher intellectual and moral life than hundreds of the raw children of nature,

<sup>1</sup> Written in 1918.

whom England, France, Russia and Italy oppose to him." And, as though this were not enough, only the other day von Kühlmann spoke of compelling the *goodwill* of Germany's foes, so that we are not only to be forced to accept her culture, but forced to accept it with delight and gratitude. This is compulsory education carried to its logical conclusion. Who does not recognise the voice of the self-styled educated class dictating to the uneducated what they are to think, to believe and to practise? And how do we answer these would-be German "masters" in the school of mankind? Do we not answer precisely in the words of my Yorkshire friend, "Yes, we all want education. But we are not going to take it from *you*"?

In many of its aspects our educational practice hitherto might be compared to an attempt to grow roses in Greenland. And the worst of it is, that we have based the attempt on arguments which, in their abstract form, are unanswerable. What flower is more lovely than the rose? What country needs it more than Greenland—"to cheer the gloomy landscape and perfume the scentless air"? And



who would deny the beauty of the culture founded, as our whole educational system still remains, on the dear old classical tradition? And yet this culture is distinctly exotic to the climate. In these regions of sudden frost and long winter it can only flourish under hot-house conditions, and, when one comes to reflect, never has flourished otherwise. And I, for one, am all in favour of keeping up a hot-house here and there for the devoted culture of this beautiful and precious plant, for I doubt if any flower of native growth has an equal in fragrance or loveliness. But it can never be acclimatised in this soil. The praises sung in its honour are altogether out of proportion to its actual value in achieving the object of education, which is simply that of teaching men to make the best of the life *they have to live*.

And yet for generations past we have been trying to force this culture on a civilisation which cannot sustain it, nay, on a civilisation which it cannot sustain. This is what I mean by growing roses in Greenland. The roses are good for Greenland, but Greenland is not good for the roses—unless, indeed, we cover the whole country in with glass and set up a heating

apparatus of sufficient power to keep it warm. On the whole, it is no matter for surprise that the Greenlanders are "indifferent" to these sage proposals. And there is no method of "compulsion" which can make them anything else.

Abandoning the habits of mind, and the practice, which make education an attempt by one class to force its culture on another which does not want it, can we find a better way? Is it possible to foster, in the peculiar conditions of our time, a type of culture of which we could say, "This is education not by compulsion but by consent. Here teachers and taught are at one in what they value and in what they desire. The old relation of cap and gown *versus* jacket and knickerbockers is abolished. The old idea that the one side are all potters and the other side all clay, no longer rules the situation. The two sides are now co-operating partners in the pursuit of a common aim. Education has become reconciled with democracy"?

I believe that the word "labour" gives us the right clue. Not that education should choose its tune to please the Labour Party; still less that it should aim at turning us all

into "economically efficient instruments" to please the employers. As to both of these things, God forbid! I am thinking of labour in terms I have learnt from great teachers. I regard it as the very stuff or raw material of all human life and the "pass-word into everything that makes life worth living."

A very few simple principles need to be firmly grasped. First, that every man is, essentially, what his labour makes him; whence it follows at once that unless he is educated *by his labour* he is not educated at all. If his education, conducted on the roses-in-Greenland principle, pulls him in one direction and his labour pulls him in the opposite direction, the man will be pulled in two, but not educated—a proposition which holds equally true of the Viceroy of India, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, and the meanest hodman. The educated man is, before all else, the man who understands everything about his own work, and enough about other people's to enable him to co-operate with them intelligently in the social complex. *Per contra*, he who understands everything about somebody else's work—for example, the navigation of a Roman trireme

—and next to nothing about his own, may well stand as the type of the *uneducated* man. Alas! there are many such in these days on the cap-and-gown side of the ditch. To this we may add the further axioms—I call them so because they are among the most indisputable truths under the sun—that the only happy man is the man who enjoys his daily work, and the only good man is he who does it to the best of his ability.

Grasping these simple principles, we come in sight of our objective. The aim must be not merely to educate labour, *but to see to it that labour becomes an education*. No educational practice is worthy of its name which stops short of seeking to turn the whole labour of the community, from the Viceroy of India to the hodman, into one vast continuation school. Which is as much as to say that education is not merely a schoolmaster's problem (though it includes that), but a social problem of the first magnitude—a problem never to be solved in isolation as an affair of educational experts, but in intimate connection with a wise and broad conception of the general needs, aims and values of social life.

It is high time to have done with this Prussian tomfoolery about "the educated class" which is to "compel" the "uneducated" to learn its lessons. Strictly speaking, there is only *one* class, that of the uneducated, *to which we all belong*. As a community we have still to learn the ABC of education. Let us then school ourselves to think of education in terms of labour, remembering that labour is the common stuff of all human life, and giving to the word a meaning sufficiently broad to cover every man who has a definite status and occupation in the fabric of society. The labour problem and the education problem are not two. They are one.

## INSTITUTIONAL SELFISHNESS

THERE came to me some time ago a circular from one of the many societies which have been founded for promoting the cause of international peace and goodwill. This circular was addressed to ministers of all the Christian Churches, and it laid down certain principles, all of them excellent, which it urged the Churches to press upon public opinion and upon governments. Among these principles the chief was the duty of each nation to make some sacrifice of its individual interest for the common interest of them all, and, if I remember rightly, the circular went on to say that the international problem would remain insoluble until the principle of self-renunciation was adopted all round—an eminently true remark. When I read that, a question at once occurred to me. “When,” I asked myself, “have these Christian Churches, which are now asked to unite in

urging the principle of self-renunciation upon governments, ever shown a disposition to practise that principle *in their relations with one another* ? When has any one of the Churches or sects to which this circular has been sent made sacrifices of its own interests for the common good of all the Churches or sects ? ” I could not think of a single instance. So I refused to sign the manifesto.

Later on I received another circular, from another Society, proposing a League of the Churches—an idea evidently suggested by the League of Nations. In this circular not a word was said about self-renunciation. On the contrary a scheme was outlined, the express object of which was to enable each of the Churches to combine with the others without any sacrifice whatever of the power, the influence, the property and the beliefs which were peculiarly its own. The principle of the scheme was indeed that very doctrine of “the balance of power” which the first circular had asked the Churches to repudiate in favour of the principle of international self-renunciation. This also I refused to sign. It was in connection with these two circulars that the words

“ institutional selfishness ” first occurred to me as applicable to the Christian Churches of to-day.

On the ground of their relations with one another, the Christian Churches do not offer the world an example of lofty morality. The morality they display in those relations is at the best of a middling order. At that point they show a remarkable lack of any virtue that might fairly be called heroic, as self-renunciation undoubtedly is ; and to this extent they are in an unfortunate position for urging these virtues on the secular institutions of mankind, on governments, nations and states. They are in the position of never having practised those virtues themselves. Such phrases as “ The good of all is the good of each,” “ The misfortune of one is the misfortune of all,” do not illustrate their normal attitude to one another, but condemn it. Their attitude seldom rises beyond the level of passive toleration. Of active co-operation for the purpose of helping one another there is, so far as I can see, none. When they co-operate it is for promoting something external to them all, like temperance or housing, but they never co-operate for helping each other forward as



Churches. Certainly I cannot recall a single action on the part of the other Churches which has been designed for the purpose of helping forward the Church to which I belong. The Churches do not play the part of Good Samaritan to one another. If they no longer attack one another and provoke religious wars to make good their claims, they still remain essentially self-assertive and unsympathetic in their official relationships. Am I wrong in suggesting that just as the principle of self-renunciation all round is the only principle on which the nations of the world can unite into a corporate fraternity, so too it is the principle of effective union among Churches? Before such a union could be brought into being one or other of the Churches might even be required to consent to being wiped out for the glory of God. I see no trace of such a disposition anywhere.

Indeed, the more we consider the international situation the more analogies does it present to the inter-Church situation. International morality and institutional morality appear to be pretty much on the same level, and the level is not high. At least, the two

things have much in common, originating in the same source and developing thence the same habits of mind and the same type of illusion. Just as every Briton believes that the fortunes of civilisation depend on the maintenance of the British Empire, though no foreigner admits it for a moment, and just as every Frenchman and German has a similar belief about his own nation, so we of the Churches are always tending in practice, if not in theory, to identify the fortunes of religion with those of our own party or sect. Few of us can quite conceive of religion prospering if our sect died out. When St Francis de Sales was reproached by a friend for endangering his life by the severity of his labours, his reply was, "It is not necessary that I should live, but it is necessary that God's work should go on"; and I suppose that many a soldier in the late war said the same thing about England before going over the top. But if you look for that spirit in great institutions you find as little of it in the corporate life of Churches as in the corporate life of States. In the one field as in the other you see the strife as to who shall be greatest, the struggle for

power—in the one for power over the bodies of men, in the other for power over their souls, pursued indeed by different methods, but betraying similar motives and leading to the same type of unhappy and unbeautiful relationships between the competing units. In both fields you see the entanglement of lower motives with higher, in which the lower motives are always tending to get the upper hand, and often actually doing so. In both you see how the higher motives are invariably brought forward as excuses for the wrongs perpetrated by the lower. Thus in international affairs direct acts of spoliation and robbery, which originate in robbers' motives, are constantly exhibited under the garb of patriotism or a just interest in the good of civilisation. On the other side the jealousy of the Churches in guarding their vested interests, their power, their prestige, is easily excused as due to concern for the salvation of souls. In both again we may observe how the secondary interests of the machine gradually tend to become identified with the primary interests the machine was intended to serve. Men constantly believe that they are serving the

greater thing when in truth they are only serving the lesser—"strengthening the position of the Church," as it is called, and fully persuaded that whatever does that is of God.

The consequence of all this is manifest enough. In their relations with one another the States of the world are content with a level of morality which is far below that of a decent member of any State, and indeed the negation of it. So too the level of interdenominational morality—if morality is the right word—is far below that of any of the denominations. Looking at their relations with one another as institutions, the outstanding feature of all of them is something that would be called selfishness if it existed between individuals. Men have noted it—indeed they can hardly overlook it. This does not help the Churches to make effective headway in their proper business.

I am not unacquainted with the argument which defends institutions as necessary to religion. Taken in the abstract form this argument appears to me unanswerable. But like most unanswerable arguments its value depends on the applications that are made of it. This one has proved itself singu-

larly susceptible of misapplication. Because institutions are necessary it does not follow that you must have as many as possible, and that any kind will do. It does not follow that the institutions should absorb the energy needed for the religion they embody, nor that policy should take the place of zeal. It may be that the value of institutions to religion depends on having as few as possible, and on keeping them as inconspicuous as possible. Obviously it depends on having them of the right kind, and in right relations with each other.

Christianity on the whole has been unfortunate in the institutions it has created. They have been of a kind which obscures essentials and leads to an enormous waste of energy on secondary objects. The genius of Christianity is not quite at home in the Church or Chapel atmosphere as it exists to-day. Christ Himself would be ill at ease in all of them, and amazed in some of them. Observe that I am speaking of the institutions, not of the individuals who compose them. Among individuals good representatives of Christianity are to be found in all the Churches, though I must add that some of the best Christians I

have known belong to neither Church nor Chapel—Christians in the sense that they lived Christ-like lives. I am aware, of course, that many great authorities would not allow them to be Christians if that was all that could be said for them.

The original mistake was made when Christianity borrowed the type of its institutions from the kingdoms that are of this world, the political kingdoms, with which in an evil hour it was persuaded to enter into a most unnatural alliance. To Christianity was given the model of a heavenly city, but instead of bringing that city down to earth, it made for itself an earthly model, and so built the Tower of Babel once more. In consequence of this alliance with political institutions, the institutional life of Christianity became involved in the fatal struggle for power, which its mission was to supersede. Instead of transcending the ethics which are proper to the struggle for power, it adopted them, and gave them a new sanction and a wider currency. Its creeds became entangled with its vested interests, so that, at the present moment, it is almost impossible to disentangle the two. Even the conception of God took on

a political form, God being conceived as the cosmic potentate, ruling the universe after the Prussian model, under a system of iron law, and punishing mutineers with death—the very opposite of what Christianity means when it says that “God is Spirit,” “God is Love.” Or it became the conception in “God save the King,” of which the less said the better. This type of institution, reflecting the main features of the low civilisation Christianity was intended to transform, was by its nature provocative of strife. It required an enormous expenditure of energy in self-defence against other institutions similarly designed. The Churches became involved in the defence of interests and positions, in the pursuit of “policy,” and the Gospel had to be content with the energy that was left over when “policy” had been provided for. These reasons have led many to think that Christianity has not been fortunate in the kind of institutions it has created, without prejudice to the abstract doctrine that religion needs institutions. To thoughtful men of other religions in the East this aspect of Christianity is deeply repugnant.

The ideal type of institution for a religion

like Christianity would be one which was entirely indifferent to its own fortunes *as an institution*, and prepared at any moment to die in order to live. The distribution of its energies would be the reverse of that which now obtains. Nearly all would go into the attack upon the gloom, misery and ignorance of the world; next to nothing would go into the defence of vested interests, whether they take the form of creeds, property, power, position, or prestige. The creeds would be left to stand or fall according to their success in saving men's souls; for unless they bear that test there is no other way of making them good. Everything else would be secondary to that. And the only good sectarian would be the man who forgot as often as possible to what sect he belonged.

So far as I am aware no such type of Christian institution is at present to be found anywhere on the earth, though perhaps, as Plato would say, it exists in the heavens. So long as it exists somewhere, and is a Reality, it does not much matter whether it exists *here* or *there*.



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